

Making Public Parks Public  
Increasing Inclusivity in Denver's Civic Center Park

by

Kaitlin Bernal

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree:

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Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning  
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Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Anne Beamish

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# Abstract

One of the most important aspects of a public space is its accessibility and inclusivity for all people. In urban parks, this often means that a wide variety of users must be considered during the design process. Denver Civic Center Park is a historic urban park in the heart of Denver's downtown. The park caters to a variety of people ranging from tourist, who briefly visit the park, to people who are experiencing homelessness, and call the park home. Ensuring that the needs of people varying in age, culture, and economic background is key to any urban park's success.

Semi-structured interviews, site observations, site inventory and analysis, and critical mapping helped assess Denver's Civic Center Park's inclusivity and accessibility. Through a combination of improved infrastructure and additional amenities, a thoughtful redesign of the historic park addressed today's challenges with homelessness and created a more inclusive environment. Because of the historic nature of the park only specific modifications to the southern area were made.

There are two reasons to create inclusive public spaces. The first is the social mixing that comes from people of different backgrounds and cultures sharing a safe environment. Social mixing connects groups of

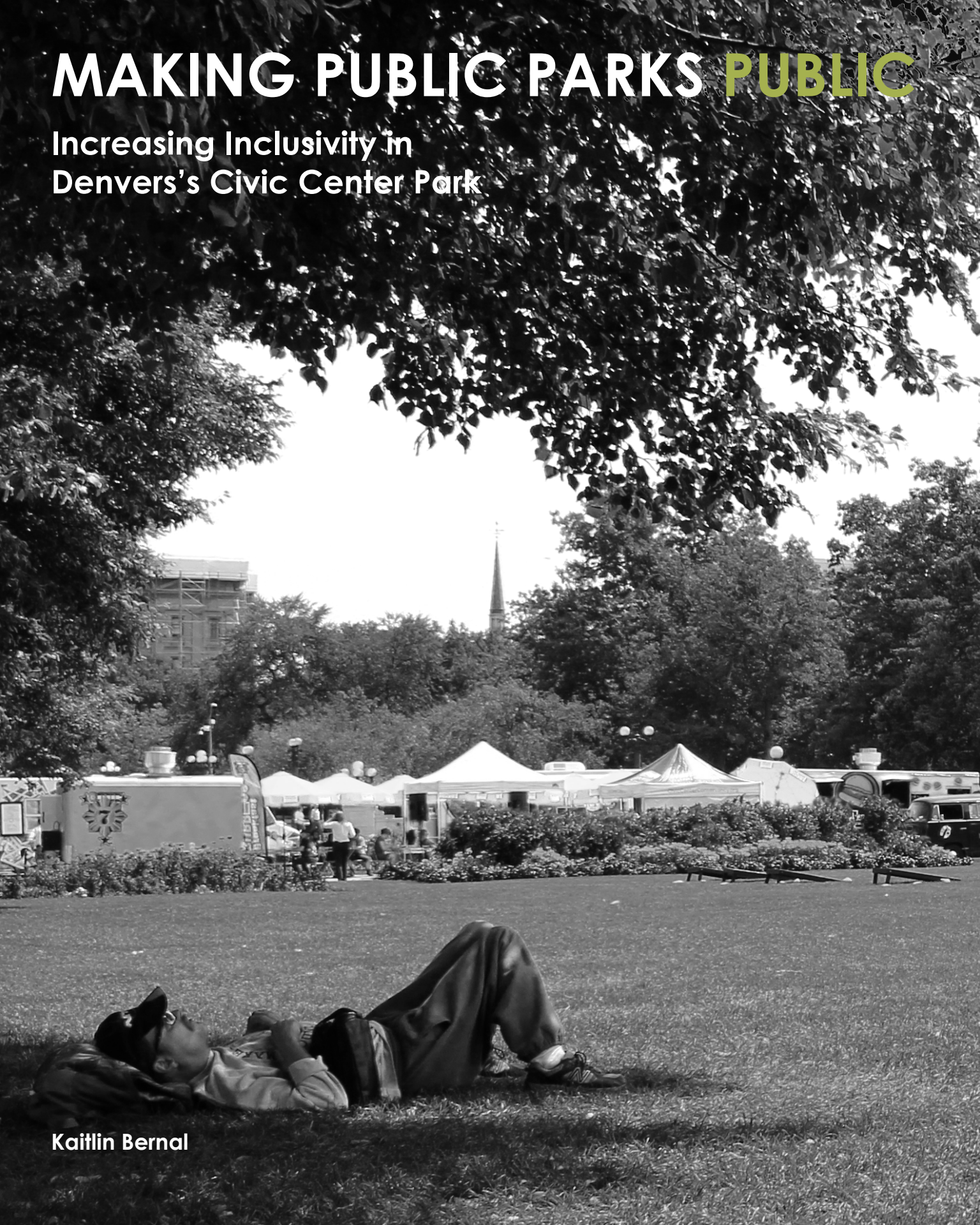
people through passive and active interactions that are built on seeing someone or overhearing their conversations. Social interactions, that take place in a safe environment, can trigger empathy within the community and start to build relationships between people of different socioeconomic groups.

The second reason focuses on the ethics of designing public space. The infrastructure and policy of a public space should not be exclusive to a "desirable" demographic, but should include all existing users and the surrounding community. Because a large portion of users in Denver's Civic Center Park are people experiencing homelessness, the design and programmatic amenities should consider their needs and desires.

Landscape architects can influence the public's views and the way people interact with each other by designing safe and active urban public spaces. In this project I asked, what design policies and strategies could be implemented to make Denver's Civic Center Park more inclusive and secure for all park users, including those experiencing homelessness?

# MAKING PUBLIC PARKS PUBLIC

Increasing Inclusivity in  
Denver's Civic Center Park



Kaitlin Bernal

Kaitlin Bernal  
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Masters Report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:  
Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)

Major Professor: Dr. Anne Beamish  
Supervisory Committee: Dr. Huston Gibson and Dr. Lisa Melander

Kansas State University  
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Department of Landscape Architecture & Regional Community Planning



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THE COLLEGE of  
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# Table of Contents

## 01 Introduction

Dilemma .....	02
Goals .....	04
Site Location .....	06
Regional Map .....	08
Downtown Map .....	10
Site Map .....	12

## 02 Background

Overview .....	17
Park History .....	18
Existing Conditions .....	20
Civic Center Events .....	22
Existing Concerns of Homelessness in the Park .....	24
Homelessness .....	26
Denver's Homeless Organizations .....	30
Homelessness Centered Design .....	34
Importance of Inclusivity .....	36
Safety in Public Parks .....	38
Types of Interactions in Public Space .....	40

## 03 Methodology

Overview .....	45
Methods Overview .....	46
Site Boundaries .....	48
Critical Mapping .....	48
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	50
Observations .....	52
Site Inventory .....	59



## 04 Findings

Overview .....	63
Reasons for Denver's Homelessness .....	64
Attempts at Solutions .....	68
Addressing Safety .....	70
Other Denver Parks .....	72
Future Solutions.....	74
In the Park .....	76
Denver's Civic Center Park .....	78
Real Safety in Civic Center Park .....	82
Public Transportation .....	84
Homeless Services .....	86

## 05 Policy

Overview .....	91
Existing Policy .....	92
Key Findings and Study Implications .....	93
Alternative Proposal to the Ban .....	94

## 06 Design

Overview .....	98
Design Intent.....	100
Process .....	100
Concept.....	102
Permanent Amenities .....	104
Temporary Amenities .....	104
East Plaza .....	106
Public Restrooms .....	108
West Plaza .....	114
Greek Amphitheater .....	118
Hidden Spaces .....	122
Chapter Summary .....	124

## 07 Conclusion

Limitations .....	128
Future Research.....	128
Conclusion .....	130

# List of Figures

Cover Page: Photographed by Author

Chapter Introduction Pages: Photographed by Author

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1.1. Social interactions over a game of chess in 16th st. Mall.	4
Figure 1.2. Passive interaction of a passerby seeing three men sleeping in Civic Center Park.	5
Figure 1.3. Social interactions between a service volunteer and a person experiencing homelessness.	5
Figure 1.4. Plan view of Denver's Civic Center Park.	7
Figure 1.5. Regional map of the Denver metro area.	8
Figure 1.6. Map of Denver's downtown.	10
Figure 1.7. Denver's Civic Center Park and the context adjacent to the park.	12

## Chapter 2: Background

Figure 2.1. Historic image of the Olmsted Brothers' plan 1916.	19
Figure 2.2. Site inventory photographs.	21
Figure 2.3. Civic Center Eats is a weekday event that brings food trucks into the park during the summer months.	23
Figure 2.4. 2016 Woman's March in Denver's Civic Center Park.	23
Figure 2.5. Taste of Colorado, an annual event that encourages local vendors to transform the park into a marketplace	23
Figure 2.6. Park surveys in 2005 help determine the needs and desires of the community.	25
Figure 2.7. People experiencing homelessness often seek refuge in urban parks during the day.	29
Figure 2.8. Service volunteer sits down to speak with a person experiencing homelessness.	32
Figure 2.9. An adaptive use of the city's infrastructure provides a small amount of refuge.	37
Figure 2.10. Because there is high diversity in the park, capitalizing on it can be an asset to the park.	41

## Chapter 3: Methodology

Figure 3.1. Observation Locations.	47
Figure 3.2. Site boundaries of Denver's Civic Center Park.	49
Figure 3.3. Observation locations and the boundaries associated with each space.	52
Figure 3.4. Handout for on-site traces notes.	57
Figure 3.5. Handout for on-site location mapping.	58
Figure 3.6. Handout for on-site site inventory.	59

## Chapter 4: Findings

Figure 4.1. People sleeping on 16th st. Mall before the urban camping ban was enacted.	66
Figure 4.2. Protesters of Denver's urban camping ban.	69
Figure 4.3. Increased security on 16th st. Mall is meant to increase real and perceived safety of the public space.	71
Figure 4.4. Before and after a public plaza was turned into a dog park in response to the homeless who congregated there.	73
Figure 4.5. Temporary housing structures have the potential to provide relief to various groups of people.	75
Figure 4.6. Man sitting with all his possessions in Denver's Civic Center Park.	76
Figure 4.7. Historic statues as well as informational signs of the park's history help to educate the public of the historic value of the park.	79
Figure 4.8. Site inventory images help illustrate the activities that take place in the park.	80
Figure 4.9. Downtown Denver's Crime Rate.	82
Figure 4.10. Break downs of the criminal activities that take place in the park reveal that a large majority of crimes are quality of life crimes and does not affect the safety of the park.	83
Figure 4.11. Public transportation in close proximity with Denver's Civic Center Park.	84
Figure 4.12. Homeless Services in close proximity with Denver's Civic Center Park.	86

## Chapter 5: Policy

No figures

## Chapter 6: Design

Figure 6.1. The design proposals are located in the southern part of Denver's Civic Center Park.	101
Figure 6.2. Activating the park with additional amenities is essential to making Denver's Civic Center Park more inclusive.	102
Figure 6.3. Visibility is a key component in addressing perceived safety throughout the park and is part of the overall concept of design.	107
Figure 6.4. Portland addresses the urban public restroom crisis with the Portland Loo, a very durable alternative.	109
Figure 6.5. The east plaza has permanent amenities to encourage more people to use the park and stay there for longer periods of time.	110
Figure 6.6. The restroom layout is simple and transparent for safe use and easy cleaning.	111
Figure 6.7. Iconic mountain sculptures can bring a sense of identity to the space as well as help users remember their lockers.	112
Figure 6.8. Many existing and future amenities could help ease the hardship of living on the streets as well as provide opportunities for positive social interactions.	114
Figure 6.9. Service access can work with a hardscape plaza to provide functional space throughout the day.	115
Figure 6.10. Providing spaces that can transform with the users will help activate all areas of the park.	116
Figure 6.11. The Greek Amphitheater is a key component to the existing park and the history of Denver's civic space.	118
Figure 6.12. The Greek Amphitheater is an iconic sculptural structure that showcases Denver's history and has gone through great efforts to be renovated and preserved.	118
Figure 6.13. Preserving the Greek Amphitheater for historic value as well as existing events is essential to the design.	119
Figure 6.14. The Greek Amphitheater could provide a safer alternative for people who are sleeping in allies.	120



Figure 6.15. Two hidden alcoves within the Greek Amphitheater are existing spaces that are unsanitary and are often locations for illegal activities to occur, such as public urination.	122
Figure 6.16. A ramp instead of stairs will open up the hidden area for better visibility and ADA access.	123

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Figure 7.1. Solutions, such as giving a person who lacks dental hygiene an apple, will not solve hunger. Understanding the problem thoroughly is essential to thoughtful solutions.	129
Figure 7.2. Denver Civic Center Park has the space and the location to design for all people including those who are experiencing homelessness. Because of its size, various activities and users can use the space simultaneously leading to informal interactions between people experiencing homelessness and those who are not.	130

# List of Tables

## Chapter 3: Methodology

Table 3.1. Interview questions for public and private agencies and non-profits.	51
Table 3.2. Interview questions for landscape architect that worked on Triangle Park, in Denver.	51
Table 3.3. Interview questions for people in line for a free lunch in Denver's Civic Center Park.	51
Table 3.4. Observation Schedule.	53
Table 3.5. Handout for on-site behavior mapping.	54
Table 3.6. Handout for on-site active and passive interaction observations.	55
Table 3.7. Handout for on-site time in space counting.	56

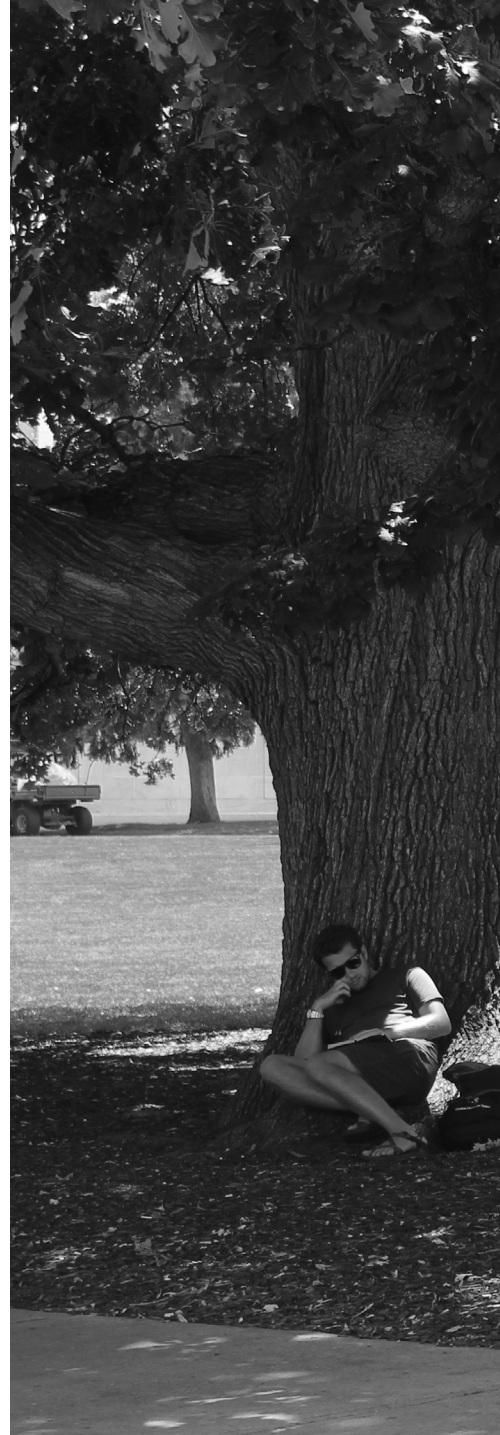
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chapter





# Introduction

## *Dilemma*

Public parks are gradually becoming more restrictive about who can use the space. Through programmatic changes and physical barriers many cities are pushing out “undesirable” groups of people, including people who are experiencing homelessness. Urban camping laws and other park regulations create unwelcoming environments in places that are intended to be open for all. The purpose of this report is not to create a homeless park, but instead to encourage designers to include all people when designing public spaces.

There are many misconceptions about homelessness and because of this, it often affects the city’s self image negatively (Atiyeh, 2016). This has led to many municipalities to “clean” cities of homelessness. Current strategies have approached the problem by pushing people experiencing homelessness out of city limits. In doing so, cities are not addressing the problem, but making them harder to see and therefore more difficult to resolve (Chandler, 2016).

The issue of how cities treat homelessness is highly controversial and in some cases are considered inhumane. Existing interactions between housed people and those

experiencing homelessness often occur on the side of a road or with aggressive panhandlers in the downtown. Neither of these interactions are positive for anyone.

Denver is experiencing an increase homelessness. Between 2011 and 2015 the number of Metro Denver’s homeless increased by nearly 1,000 individuals, based on a HUD point-in-time survey (PIT) (HUD, 2015). The PIT survey is a snapshot of the overall picture of homelessness in Metro Denver, but it cannot describe the entire situation. (Denver Rescue Mission, 2017) In reality this number is extremely low because of the difficulty in counting a very hidden population. Denver’s 2016 PIT survey documented 5,467 people experiencing homelessness when actually this number is thought to be closer to four times as many (Smith, 2016).

In 2012, Mayor Michael Hancock signed the urban camping bill into law, a law that prohibited “lying down covered.” Although the bill was controversial, it passed 9-4 (Denver Post, 2012). It was not until this past year that the law started to be strictly enforced. In March and April of 2016 enforcement of the urban camping ban increased

nearly 500 percent compared to the previous 45 months (Walker, 2016). The majority of the enforcement did not result in arrest, but instead verbal contact or written warnings. (Denver Police Department, 2016). The police officers approach the individuals in violation of the urban camping ban by first offering the services the city provides such as emergency shelters. However, when most refuse, they were still forced to “move along” (Walker, 2016).

Many emergency services are available in the Denver region and provide a variety of services, including temporary/emergency housing, food, and counselling. However, problems with safety and security as well as navigation of these services have proven to be real challenges within the system (Smith, 2016).

Safety and perceived safety are difficult dilemmas to address and heavily influence the success of a park. The best way to do so is to try and educate the public about the reality of their environment. The reality of Denver’s Civic Center Park is that it is a safe park for most users. Many urban parks use different regulations or systems to try to reduce the risk of crime. Unfortunately, some

of these solutions create restrictive environments that are only welcoming to families and dog owners. This leaves all other people unable to access the public space.

In an attempt to make public parks “safer,” we are destroying the essence of public space and creating restrictive, underused parks within our cities.



## Goals

The intent of this project was to create an inclusive environment for all people in Denver's Civic Center Park. Homelessness is a complex problem that is difficult to fully understand unless you deal with it first hand. We can break down misconceptions of people experiencing homelessness by creating safe and active environments that allow social interactions to take place. These interactions can be as passive as seeing someone sleeping on a bench, or active as serving a stranger a meal. However, because these

interactions occur in safe environments, they can start to trigger empathy for people experiencing homelessness, instead of fear.

The redesign of Denver's Civic Center Park will have more amenities to support a basic human needs as well as better visibility to encourage a better sense of perceived and real safety.



Figure 1.1. Social interactions over a game of chess in 16th st. Mall. (Monster1000, 2007)





Figure 1.2. Passive interaction of a passerby seeing three men sleeping in Civic Center Park. (Jusino, 2009)



Figure 1.3. Social interactions between a service volunteer and a person experiencing homelessness. (University of Denver, 2009)



## *Site Location*

Denver's Civic Center Park is surrounded by public arts and governmental buildings. There is no residential housing directly adjacent to the park. The park has extensive flexible lawn space that is used for both recreation as well as relaxation.

The area chosen to undergo site alterations is in the south end of the park (Figure 1.4.) The selected sites are underused lawn areas that will be transformed into additional amenities for all park users. These amenities will all be highly visible from 14th Ave. This will allow for more eyes to be on those areas creating a increased sense of security. Improved service access will also be addressed through the site redesign. Keeping high visibility throughout the park and addressing the hidden spaces that currently exist is vital to the success of this park. If done correctly, this can alter the negative perception of safety that currently exist in Denver's Civic Center Park.

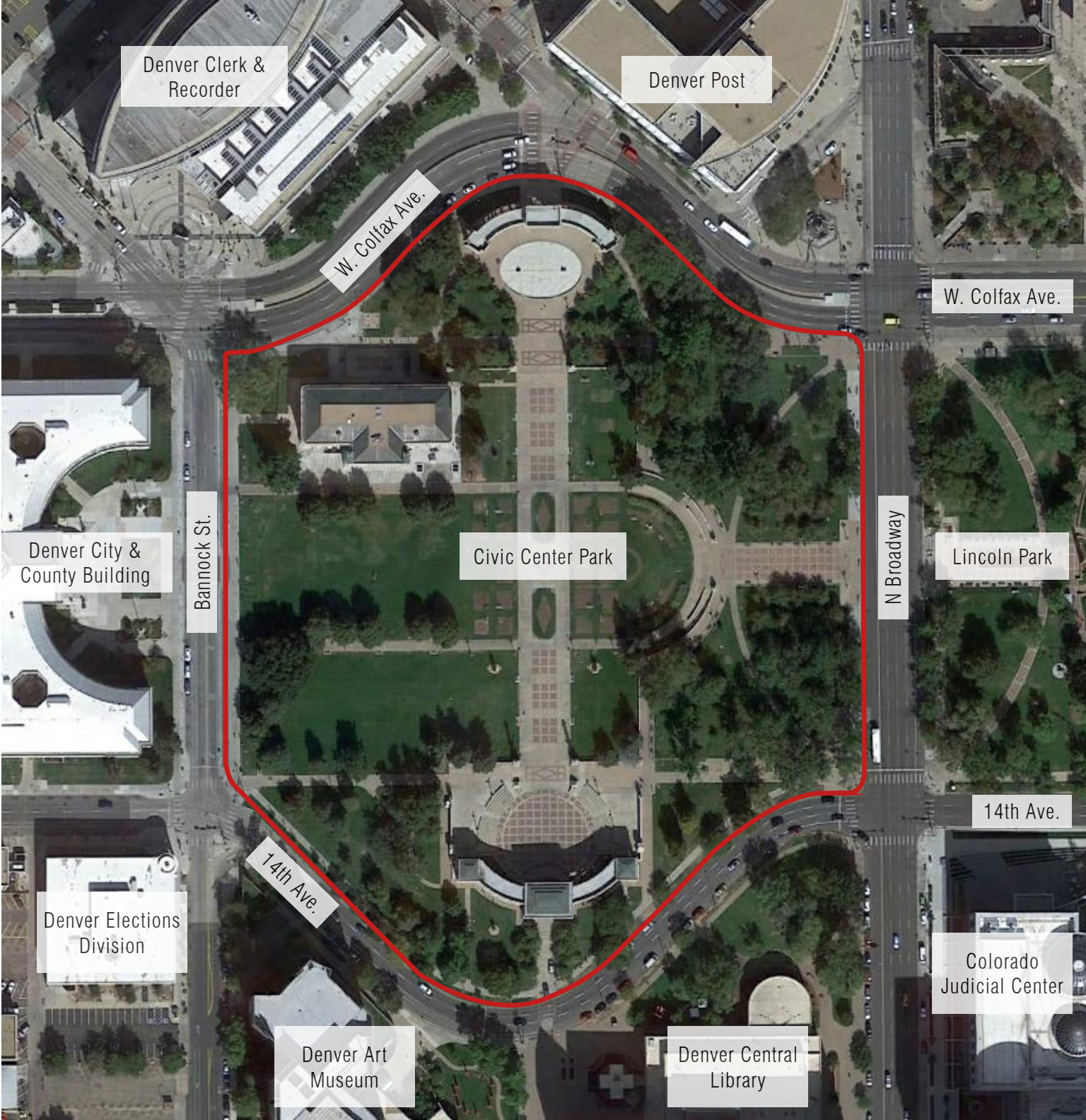
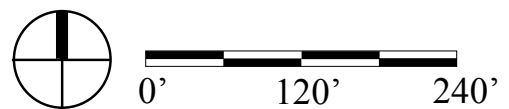


Figure 1.4. Plan view of Denver's Civic Center Park.  
(Adapted from: Google Earth, 2015).





## Regional Map

Denver is just east of the Rocky Mountain Range and the climate of the city is fairly temperate because of the protection from the mountains. In the winter the average daily high temperature is 45 degrees Fahrenheit. In the summer the average daily high is 86 degrees Fahrenheit. Denver has a low amount of precipitation with the sun shining more than 300 days of the year. In the summer, its low humidity makes it comfortable to be outside under a tree even on a hot day (Visit Denver, 2017).

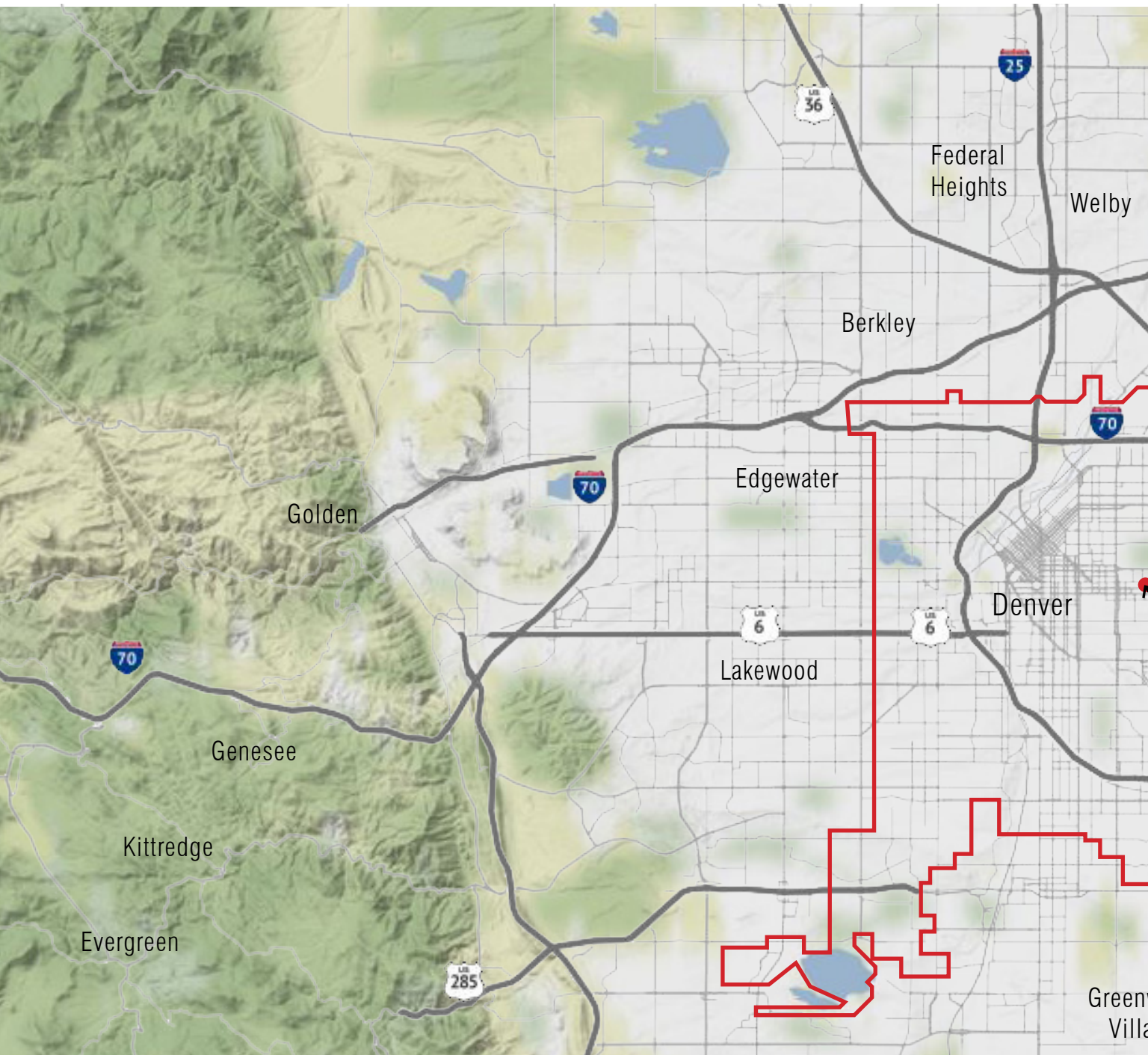
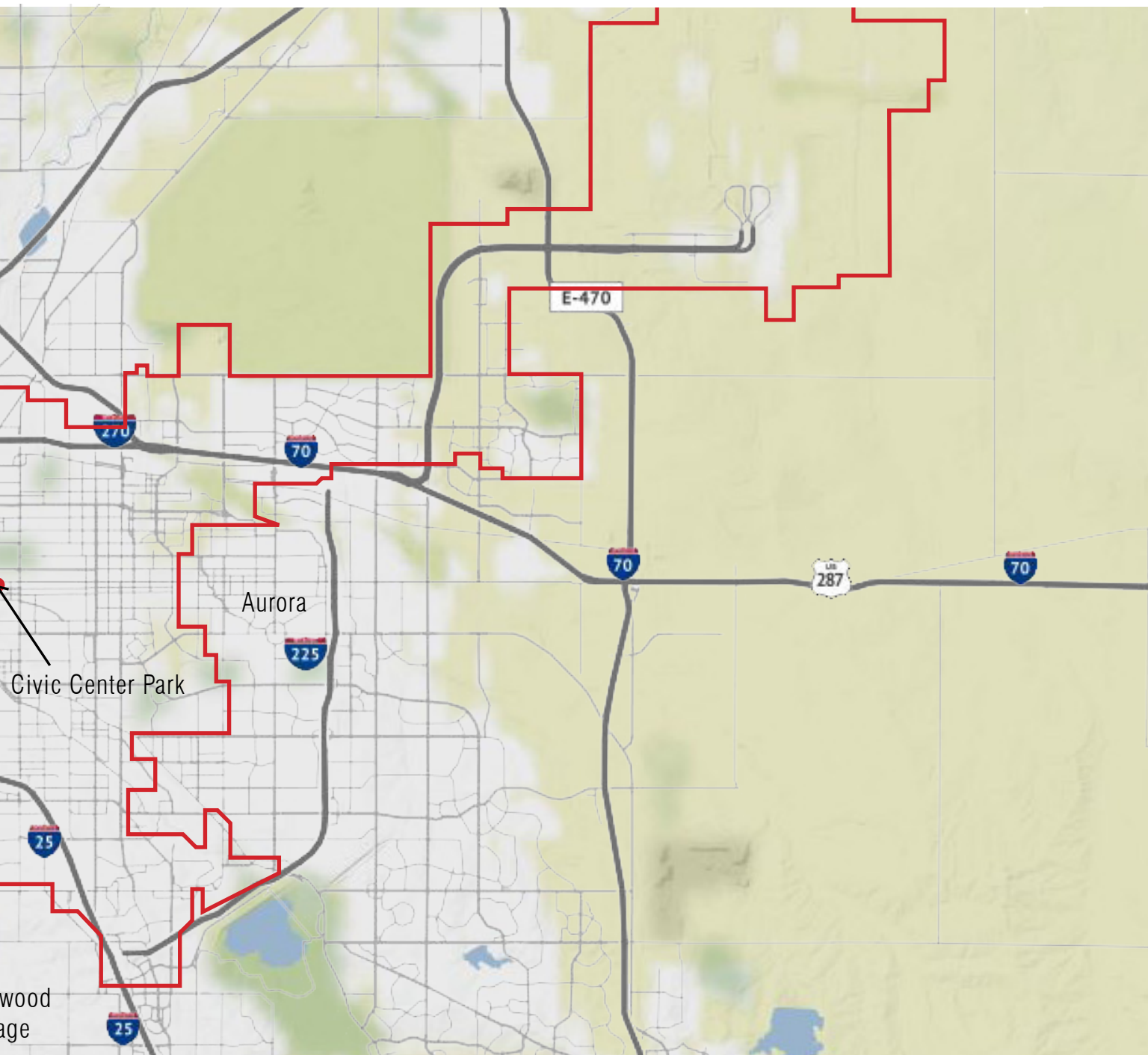


Figure 1.5. Regional map of the Denver metro area. Adapted from (Adapted from: Stamen Design, 2017)





## Downtown Map

Denver's Civic Center Park is located in the central downtown region where the urban street grid turns from orthogonal north, south, east, west to a diagonal street grid. The park is located close to city amenities such as sport stadiums, theme parks, and event centers to the north and west and more residential neighborhoods to the south and east.

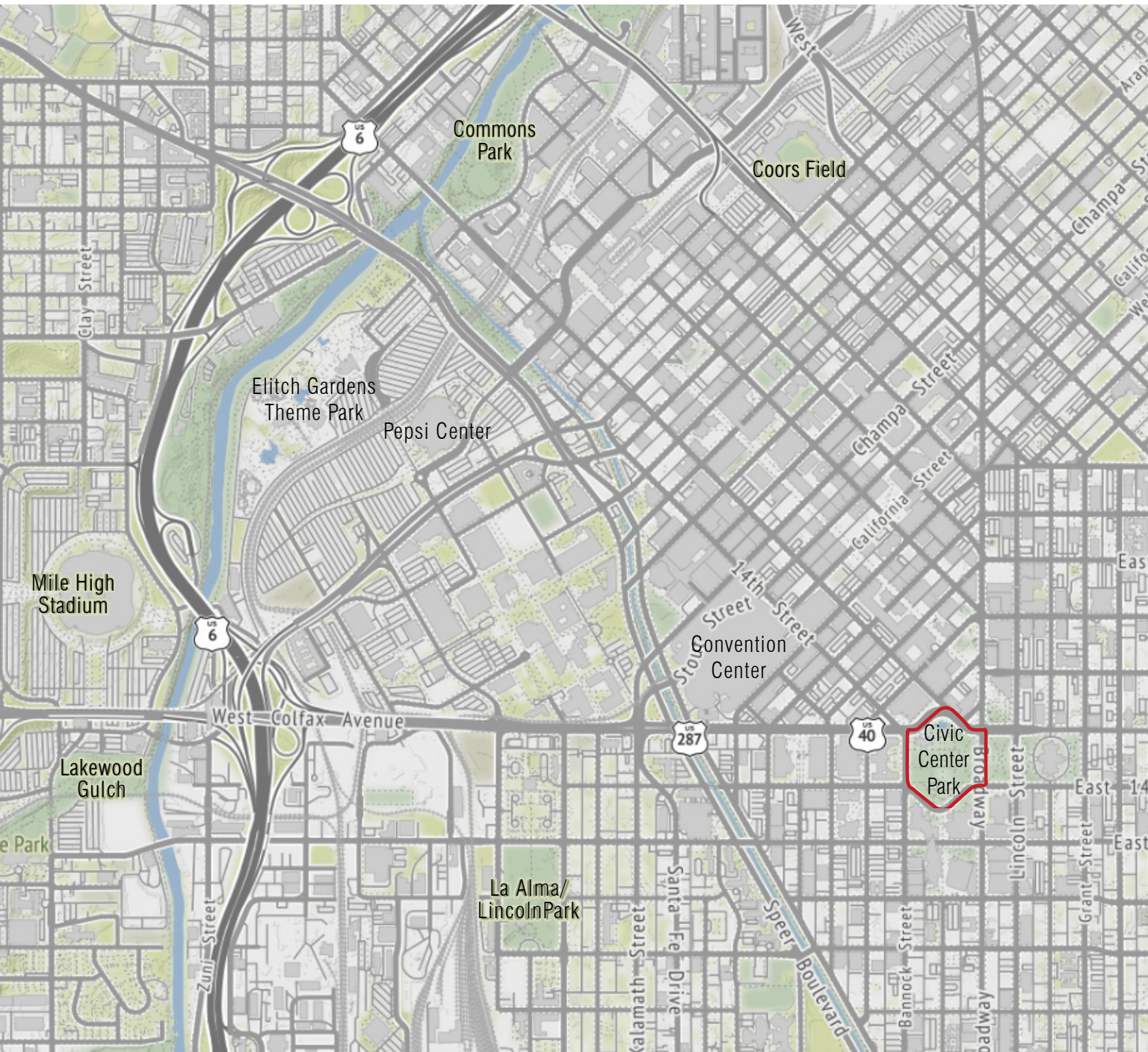
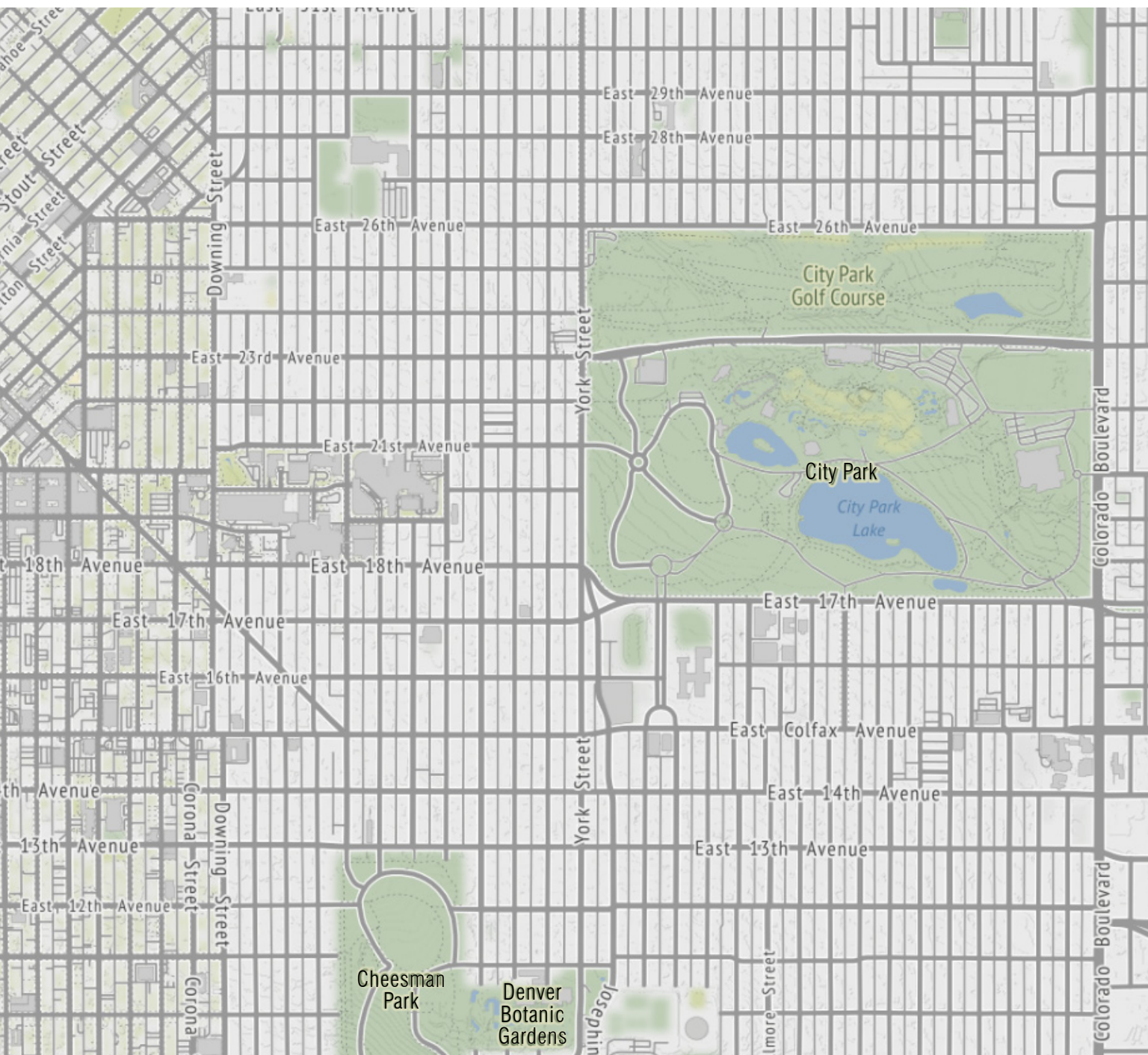




Figure 1.6. Map of Denver's downtown. Adapted from (Adapted from: Stamen Design, 2017)



## Site Map

Denver's Civic Center Park is surrounded by public arts and governmental buildings. There is no residential housing directly adjacent to the park. The park is also a National Historic Landmark as a product of the City Beautiful movement. The Greek Amphitheater and Voorhies Memorial are iconic neoclassical structures. It also has extensive flexible lawn space that could be used for recreational use, but that is not the sole purpose.

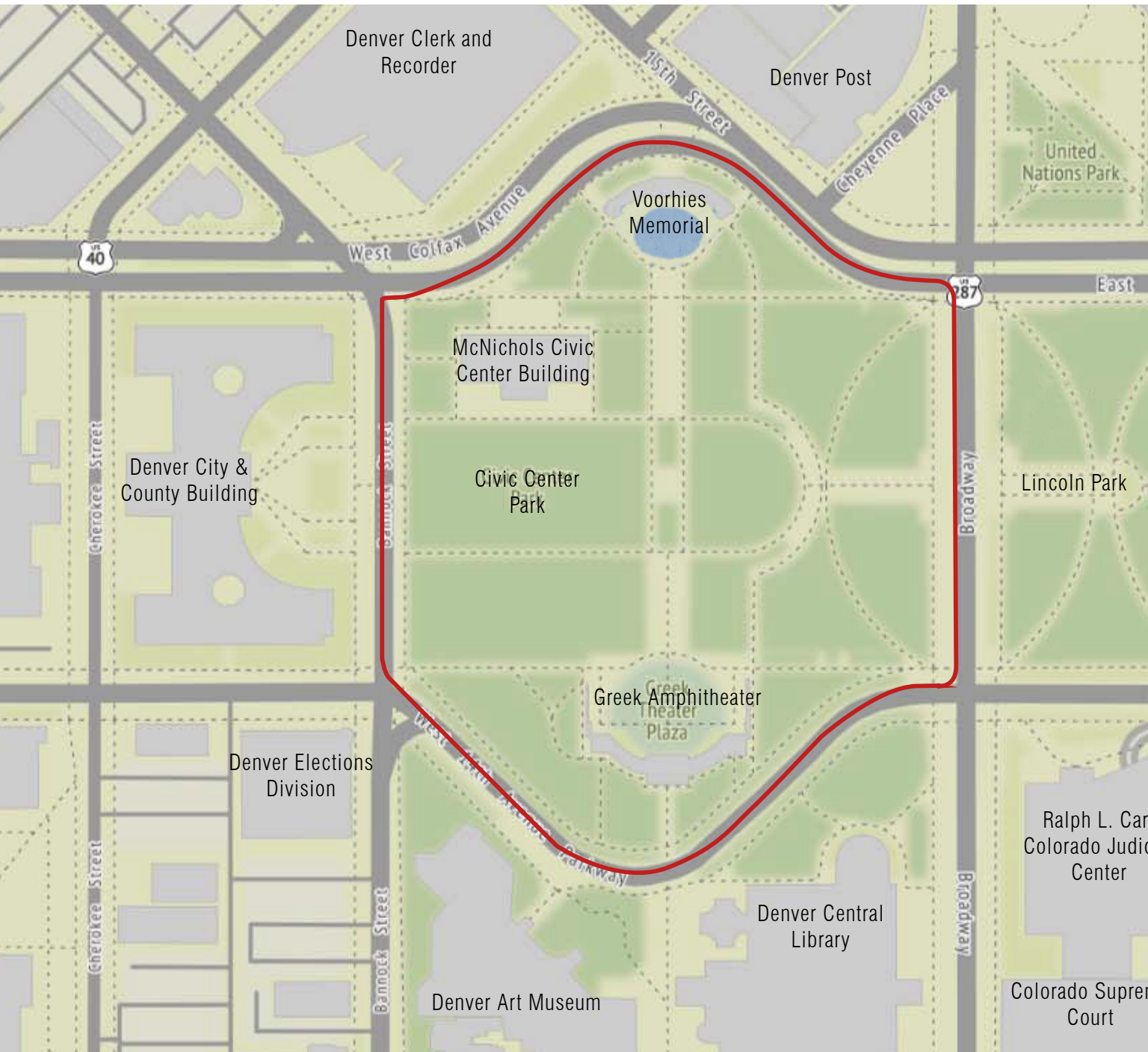
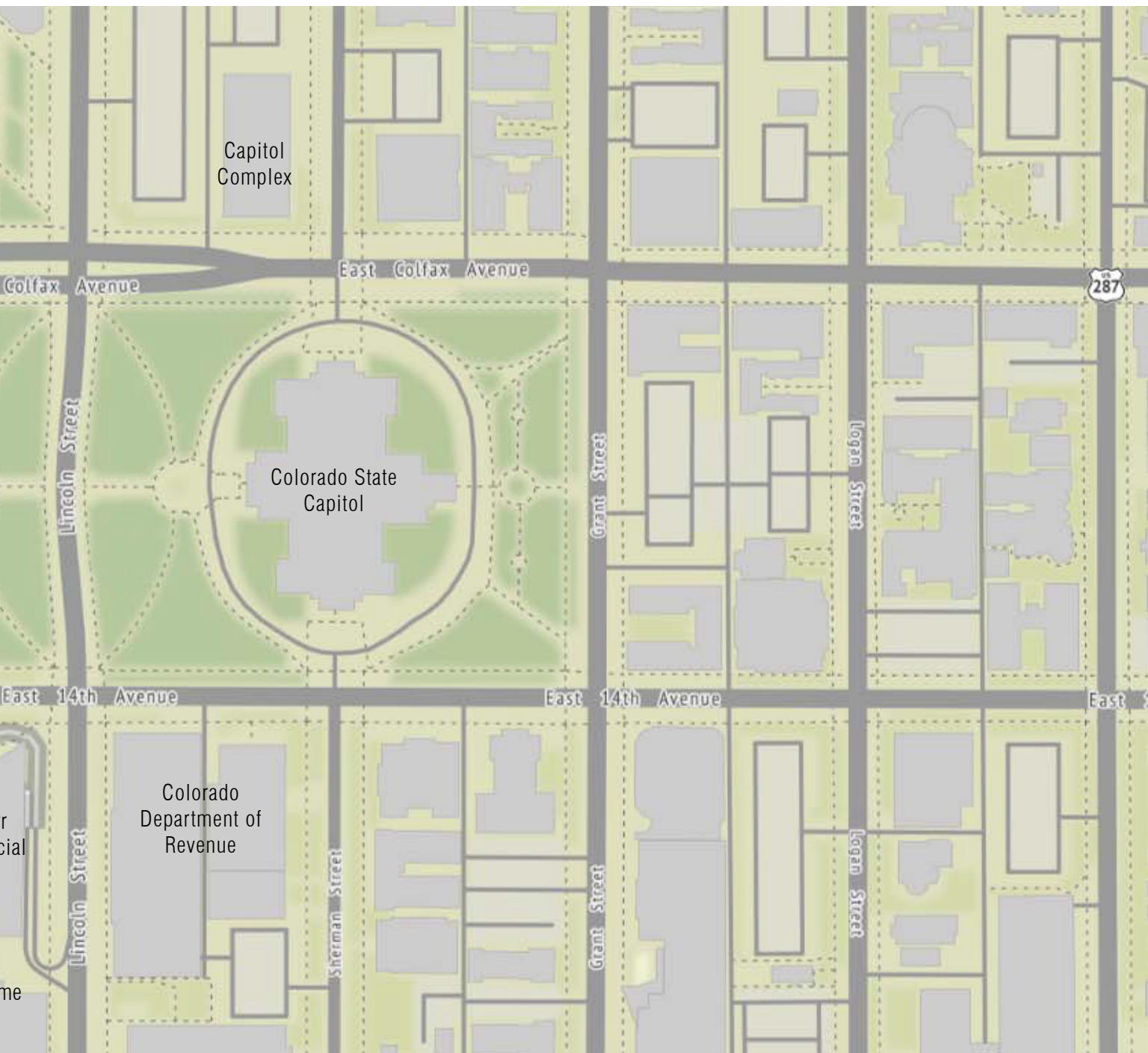




Figure 1.7. Denver's Civic Center Park and the context adjacent to the park. (Adapted from: Stamen Design, 2017)







# chapter 2



Background



# Overview

Denver's Civic Center Park is a historic park that has over the years been perceived as a unsafe environment because of the high number of homeless that congregate there. In the past 10 years, efforts have been made to bring back activities to the park. Civic Center Conservancy is a non-profit that has worked with the city to provide these amenities to the public.

Understanding the history of the park, the changes that have been made in recent years, and the existing conditions influenced the strategies proposed to make the park more inclusive to all people for longer periods of the day. Understanding the term homelessness as well as the misconceptions that come with it was valuable to designing amenities that will improve the conditions of living on the street. Understanding perceived vs. real safety and the design strategies used to increase both were essential to the success of the redesign and allow people to feel comfortable to interact with strangers. All of these issues were explored through existing literature and tied back into the final design.



## *Park History*

The Denver Civic Center Park is a historic urban park that was a part of the City Beautiful movement in the early 20th century (Scott, 1969). “Mayor Robert Speer was a civic idealist who argued that one way to improve humanity was to offer it an uplifting urban environment” (Denver’s Park and Recreation, 2005). Mayor Robert Speer, Denver’s mayor from 1904-1912, campaigned for urban beauty and public improvements throughout the city. Before him was mayor Richard Sopris, who was also passionate about the City Beautiful movement. He envisioned the first Civic Center Park plan in 1878 (Denver’s Park and Recreation, 2005).

The City Beautiful Movement is an American urban planning movement that occurred between the 1890’s and the 1920’s. The movement focused on revitalizing civic centers, parks, and boulevards as a way to beautify the downtown areas. At the time people were moving into the city, and for the first time the urban population outnumbered the rural population. This rapid increase in people led to dirty, congested, and unsafe cities, which ultimately led to more political support to improve the public spaces (Blumberg, 2015).

Charles M. Robison was the planner hired by Mayor Speer, who defined the vision for Denver in 1906. His vision for the city included a civic center that would “emphasize and dignify the State Capital” as well as preserve the view towards the mountains. In 1912-1914 the Olmsted Brothers were hired by later Mayor Henry Arnold to work on the Civic Center Park. Their design combined naturalistic principles with formal qualities. They proposed a tapis vert set in an axially symmetrical arrangement. The major elements included a forest, a concert grove, formal gardens, and an abundance of lighting features. The Olmsted Brother’s design can be seen in Figure 2.2 in a plan drawing. In 1917, the Olmsted Brothers were fired after Speer was reelected and Edward Bennett was brought on to finish the design. Bennett’s architectural training led him to neoclassical planning, balancing open space with buildings. Renovations and small alterations have taken place since then, but the City Beautiful Movement design is still intact (Denver’s Park and Recreation, 2005).

In 2012, the Civic Center area, including the park, was designated as a National Historic

Landmark, because of the park's preservation of the City Beautiful Movement (Historic Denver, 2012). In 2010, the park under went several renovations to

clean and preserve the neoclassical architectural elements.

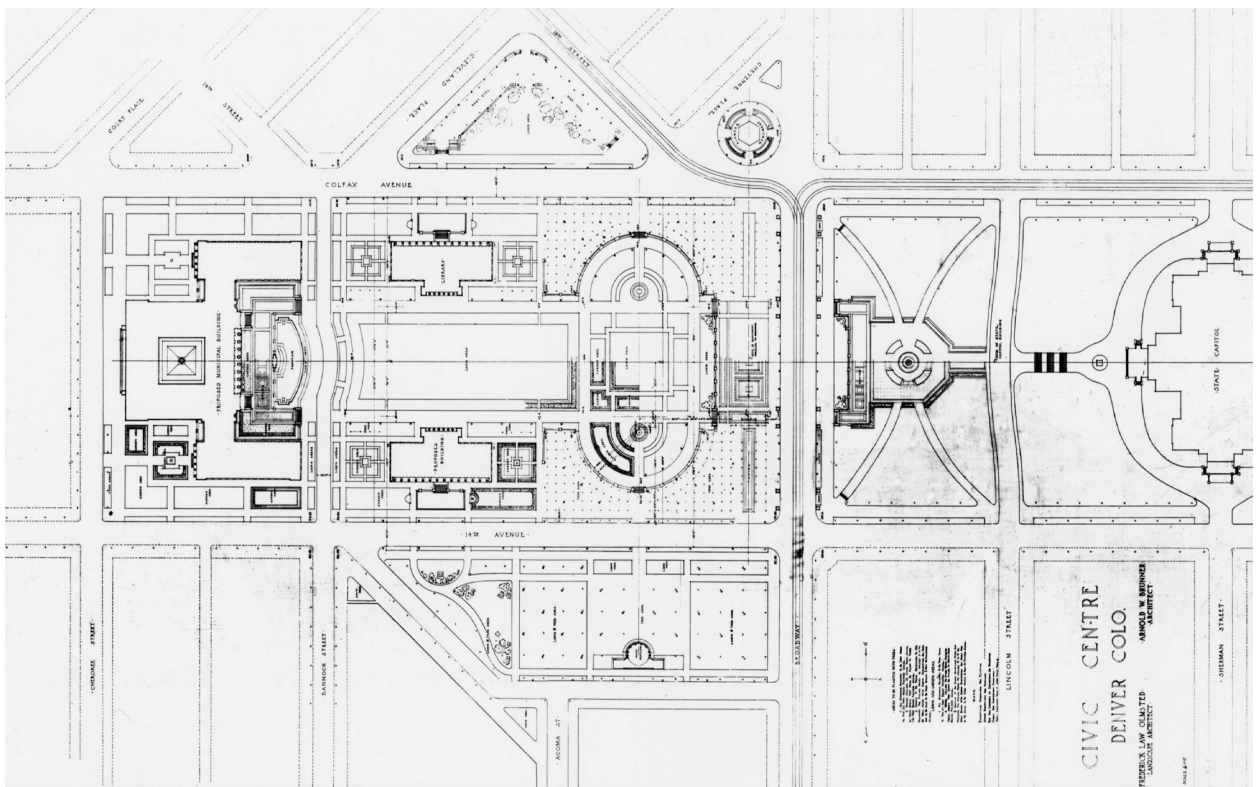


Figure 2.1. Historic image of the Olmsted Brothers' plan 1916. (National Park Service, 2015).

## *Existing Conditions*

Today, the perception of Civic Center Park tends to vary. Trip Advisor reviews of the park state that it is “a beautifully designed park with architecturally wonderful buildings, statuary and green areas. Unfortunately, it does not appear to be properly maintained. Area feels dirty, unkempt, and a hangout for the homeless and drug traffic.” and “We passed through on our way to the Capitol tour and it was our meeting place for our free Denver walking tour. It is a nice park with plenty of green spaces and some nice statues.” (TripAdvisor, 2016). Reviews like these are not uncommon. Out of 131 online reviews, 40 people rated Denver’s Civic Center Park as an excellent park, 40 also rated it as a very good park, 28 said average, 18 said poor, and 5 said terrible (TripAdvisor, 2016).

A local newspaper stated that the problem with the park was, “It’s not a destination for families or first dates, or even—and remember, this is Colorado—joggers, bikers and skateboarders. The people who do stick around might have no other option. They are often homeless or hungry, lined up a hundred strong each day at noon when a local charity passes out free sack lunches.” (Rinaldi, 2015). The park is viewed as an underused,

unsafe urban park, that is not comfortable for most passersby.

A series of on-site observations was conducted on October 21st and 23rd, 2016 in which the infrastructure and conditions were documented through photographs and notes. Generally, the park was fairly clean with few graffiti tags on park signs, minimal areas of trash littered the ground, and only the occasional article of clothing was left on benches or lying under trees. The sidewalks were in good conditions and the classical building were well preserved. There were however specific areas where cigarette butts and trash collected. Figure 2.2 are snapshots of the park’s conditions on October 21st and 23rd, 2016.



Figure 2.2. Site inventory photographs. (Bernal, 2016).



## *Civic Center Events*

Many large-scale activities and events occur in Denver's Civic Center Park. Large-scale events include:

1. Cinco de Mayo Celebrations
2. CHUN People's Fair
3. Pridefest
4. Bike to Work Day
5. Summer Festival of Free Theater
6. A Taste of Colorado
7. Veteran's Parade
8. Parade of Lights
9. Super Bowl Parade (Visit Denver, 2016)

All of these events are open to the public, but main roads are often closed and fences are set up with security checkpoints to check bags and purses. This can discourage homeless who carry all of his or her belongings with them.

Some of the everyday events are supported by the Civic Center Conservancy, which is a nonprofit organization partnered with the City and county of Denver to restore, enhance, and activate Denver's historic Civic Center Park (Civic Center Conservancy, 2016). These events include:

1. Civic Center Moves – Fitness groups teach free classes in the park.
2. Movies in the Park
3. Civic Center Eats – Food trucks stop in the park at lunch time.
4. Fourth of July Concert and Fireworks
5. Civic Center Nosh Posh – Fashion and food trucks stop in the park at lunch time.
6. Free Sacked Lunches- Lunches provided by a local charity.

These daily events have been very successful in activating the park during weekdays and business hours.

Because of the park's location in being adjacent to many government buildings, it is a common place for protest and marches. This park has a history of people wanting to send a message and stand up for what they believe is wrong.



Figure 2.3. Civic Center Eats is a weekday event that brings food trucks into the park during the summer months. (Bernal, 2016).



Figure 2.4. Woman's March in Denver's Civic Center Park. (Ogle, 2017).



Figure 2.5. Taste of Colorado, an annual event that encourages local vendors to transform the park into a marketplace. (Bernal, 2016).

## *Existing Concerns of Homelessness in the Park*

The park has been a destination for the homeless for many years. However, the needs of the homeless have generally been ignored or poorly addressed.

The city acknowledges that the park is a refuge for many people, including the homeless, and that providing a refuge is a valid park use. This is stated in their 2005 Master Plan for Denver's Civic Center Park. They also propose "hiding the homeless with additional people and increased activities" as a potential solution (Denver's Park and Recreation, 2005).

In 2005, a survey asked the public what they wanted to see improved in the park, but people who were experiencing homelessness were not addressed explicitly. The top three responses were for more activities, increased police patrol, and to address the homeless presence. People were also asked what they did not like in the park. Their response was the homeless, panhandlers, and drunks. These were listed far more often than even crime. Unfortunately this is a common response to homelessness. People's misconception and negative perspectives of people experiencing homelessness cause them to be seen as an

undesirable group in most public spaces. However, public spaces are not meant to cater to only the "desirables". They are meant to be open and accessible to all (Denver's Park and Recreation, 2005).

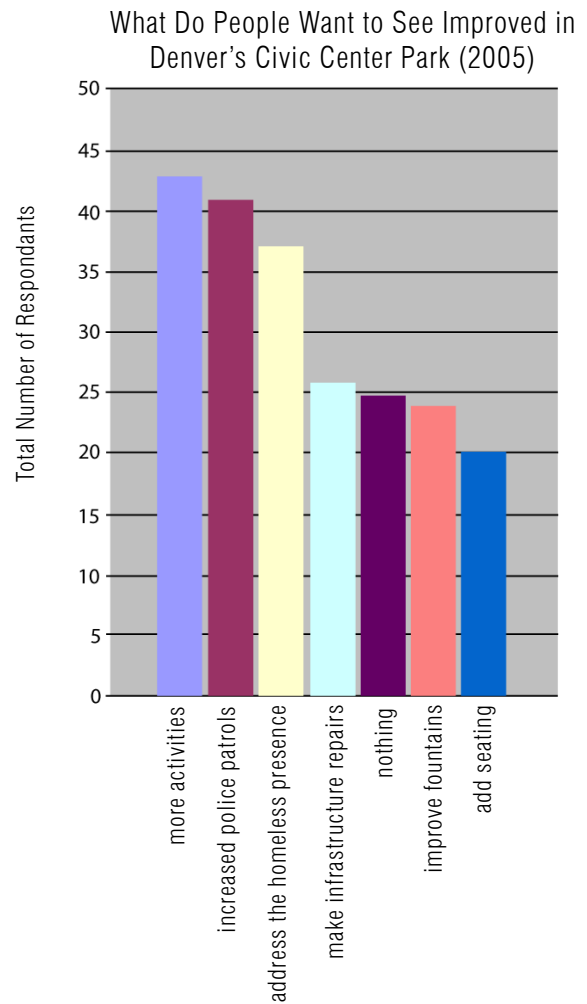
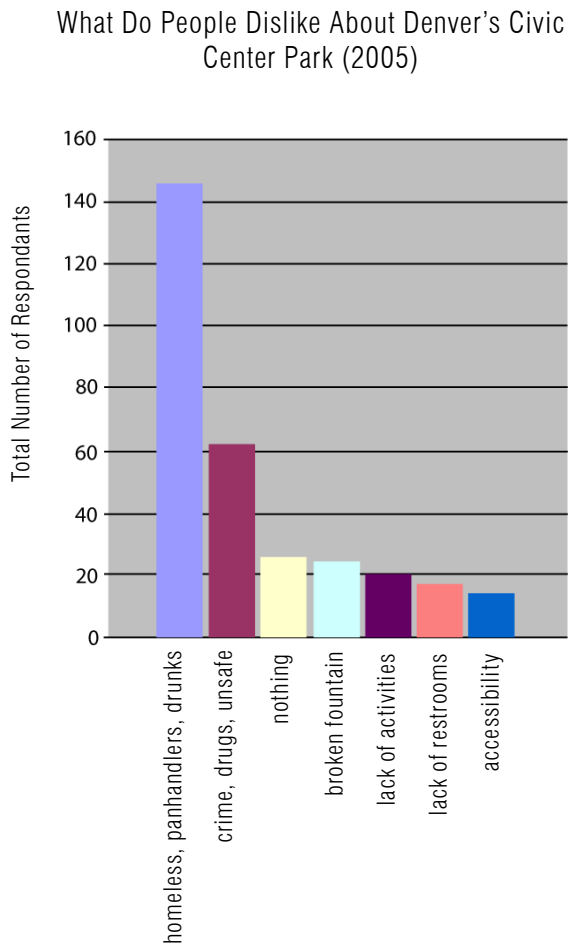


Figure 2.6. Park surveys in 2005 help determine the needs and desires of the community. (Adapted from: Denver's Park and Recreation, 2005).

## Homelessness

“The term homeless is actually a catch phrase, a misnomer that focuses our attention on only one aspect of an individual’s plight: his lack of residence or housing. In reality the homeless usually have no job, no function, no role within the community; they generally have few if any social supporters. They are jobless, penniless, functionless, and supportless as well as homeless.” (Baum & Burnes, 1993). Homelessness is a largely generalized term and that has led to misunderstandings and negative stereotypes. The federal government’s definition of homelessness is an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a fixed nighttime residency that is provided by temporary housing or places not designed for regular sleeping accommodations for humans (HAA, 2006).

There are three major types of homelessness. *Transitional or temporary* homelessness is when the individual is between stable living arrangements. Often the homelessness is brief and happens once in a lifetime. *Episodic* homelessness is when an individual or family gets stuck in a cycle of homelessness. Again, the homelessness is usually

brief, but happen more frequently in one’s lifetime. Finally, *chronic* homelessness is a more permanent condition and can last years on end (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010).

Many other terms have been developed to help define the homeless. These include chronically homeless individuals, chronically homeless families, individuals, people in families, sheltered homeless people, unaccompanied youth (under 18), unaccompanied youth (18-24), parenting youth, and unsheltered homeless people. (HUD, 2015) These terms break down the overarching idea of homelessness and focus on their residency status. Though there are several conditions that may affect a homeless individual such as drugs, alcohol, divorce, or lack of job, these conditions are not used to define the types of homelessness. Many reasons can lead to homelessness and housing hardship forms a continuum not easily dichotomized into homeless and non-homeless groups (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010).

The reasons why a person becomes homeless ranges from large to small scale. The large scale focuses on the structural forces that create a population of poor people at risk



of homelessness, such as access to affordable housing and effective emergency services as well as economic shifts, demographic trends and policy shifts in welfare, mental health, and housing. The small scale reasons are specific influences that lead an individual into the realm of homelessness. These influences can be personal vulnerabilities, institutional experiences, and inadequate buffers. Personal vulnerabilities often develop from the stressful nature of hard times and include physical illness, mental illness, job layoffs and substance abuse (Lee, Tyler, Wright, 2010). These personal vulnerabilities then lead to institutional experiences in foster care, treatment facilities, and prisons or jails. The problem of unsuccessful deinstitutionalization of individuals have left many individuals to enter back into the community unprepared and unsupported leading many to fall into homelessness (Metraux, 2008).

Buffering factors slow or stop the transition of highly at risk individuals from becoming homeless. Often these are support systems such as family or friends that take the at-risk individual(s) in and provide emotional and financial support. Situational crises are also factors that cause homelessness

even though there is often less documentation of them (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010). The reasons for homelessness are complex and often unique to the individual, but today's society has grouped them all to be lazy, drunks, or crazy and unworthy of the right to public space.

Every year the HUD issues a two-part report to Congress, called the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), which provides current information on the growth and statistics of homelessness across the United States (HUD, 2015). One of the key findings from the 2015 AHAR was that on a given night in January 2015, 564,708 people in America were homeless. Of these, 69% were in residential programs and 31% were found in unsheltered locations (AHAR, 2015). These numbers are similar to the statistics in 2001 when there were 31% unsheltered and 66% in emergency shelters or transitional housing (Hombs, 2001). These estimates are considered to be relatively low because of the difficulty in collecting the data. The 2015 report also found that 23% of all homeless are children under the age of 18. The total homeless population in 2015 declined by 2% from 2014 and 11% since 2007. Chronic homelessness has

declined 31% nationally, between 2010 and 2015 (AHAR, 2015). While these statistics may suggest improvement, they are not necessarily accurate in counting the true number of people experiencing homelessness and there is no doubt that it continues to be a pressing problem in today's society.

Our three largest mistakes in diagnosing the problem with the homeless are:

1. Confusing homelessness with poverty.
2. Confusing disabling alcoholism, drug addiction, and mental illness with lack of opportunity.
3. Confusing disaffiliation with lack of political power. (Baum & Burnes, 1993)

Understanding that there is ignorance and misinformation associated with homelessness is the first step to creating more innovative and successful strategies.

One of the most common solutions proposed for addressing homelessness is the creation of emergency shelters. Although they do provide many individuals with a place to sleep during extreme conditions of homelessness, shelters

are not a solution for all (Baum & Burnes, 1993). There are many issues shelters do not address, issues that need to be addressed to successfully reduce homeless rates. Medical, psychiatric and social problems are all deeply connected with homelessness (Chiang, D'Amore, Goldfrank, & Hung, 2001). The only true solution lies in providing low-income and affordable housing (Timmer, 1994). Until there is a system setup to provide low-income and affordable housing, emergency services must continue to evolve in order to support all types of homelessness.



Figure 2.7. People experiencing homelessness often seek refuge in urban parks during the day. (Beall, 2013).

## *Denver's Homeless Organizations*

To develop strategies it is important to understand the types of services that currently exist. There are many public agencies and nonprofit organizations throughout Denver and Colorado that address homelessness. Some of these organizations work in Denver's Civic Center Park.

### *Colorado's Coalition for the Homeless*

Colorado's Coalition for the Homeless is an agency focused on addressing Colorado's Homeless. Their mission is to work towards preventing homelessness and developing lasting solutions for the existing homeless and those at risk, throughout Colorado (CCH, 2016). They provide services including a continuum of housing and health services focused on physical and mental wellbeing.

"The Continuum of Housing includes: emergency shelter for the homeless, supportive housing for people with special needs, rental housing that fills the gap between what people can afford to pay and the high cost of rent, and helping families buy their first home or tenants to buy their apartment building. We also understand that

housing alone may not be enough. Along with a range of housing options, there is also a variety of services to build community and support residents, including those who have been recently homeless, the elderly, families with children, and persons with special needs." (CNHED, 2014)

Founded over 30 years ago, the Colorado's Coalition for the Homeless has helped 15,000 families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Their strategies include:

1. Honoring the dignity of those they serve and working with their capabilities as well as fostering hope.
2. Building communities to help facilitate a support system.
3. Advocating for social equality and challenging the public perception.
4. Continuously checking the quality and development of their services.
5. Using resources. (CNHED, 2014)

### *City of Denver*

Through the development of citywide plans Denver tries to recognize and address



homelessness. In September of 2016, the City of Denver's First Affordable Housing Plan passed a policy that would provide \$150 million in the next 10 years to close the affordable housing gap in Denver. "It calls for preserving or building 6,000 income qualified housing units over the next 10 years. It will be funded through a property tax increase, impact fees paid by developers, and the City of Denver's general fund and marijuana taxes" (Denver Post, 2016). Although some argue that it is not enough for what is needed, it is a major step forward.

### *Metro Denver Homeless Initiative*

Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is one of the city's CoC or Continuum of Care agencies (MDHI, 2014). CoC agencies are local planning bodies responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services in a geographic area, which may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or an entire state (HUD, 2015). The MDHI is an organization with the main goal to coordinate available homeless-serving agencies throughout the metro area for the homeless population. The

organization also identifies needs and disseminates best practices related to homelessness (MDHI, 2016).

### *Hunger Free Colorado*

Hunger Free Colorado is another anti-hunger organization that works towards providing every Coloradan access to nutritious foods, which they consider a basic human right. One of their many programs include a state-wide hotline that asks for the individual's location and then helps them locate nearby emergency food services. They also have a mobile service that provides food assistance to groups, such as the elderly. Hunger Free Colorado also focuses on school and summer meals for children ensuring that Colorado kids and teens do not go hungry while enrolled in the 1,389 participating schools (HFC, 2016).

## *Metro Caring*

Metro Caring is Denver's leading hunger prevention organization. The organization receives and redistributes over 2.3 million pounds of food each year. They focus on nutritious foods, meaning that 72% of the food distributed is fresh. Their approach is to provide free, fresh-food markets, nutrition and gardening education, and tools for self-sufficiency, such as job-training programs, financial literacy education and a state-wide ID procurement. Their mission statement is "to provide food to hungry families and individuals while promoting health and self-sufficiency" (Metro Caring, 2016). Although they do not work directly with people experiencing homelessness there is a strong connection between homelessness and hunger.

## *Impact Denver*

Impact Denver's mission is to get people involved and take action in helping out in their community. Impact started out in 2010 with a group of friends making sack lunches for the homeless and has now grown into a variety of services. Still focused on the homeless demographic, their services include taking homeless families hiking, handing out hygiene packs, clothing drives, helping to foster pets for the homeless, and providing guidance and support for women who have experienced domestic abuse, as well as continuing to hand out lunches in downtown areas including Denver's Civic Center Park (Impact, 2016). Both Impact Denver and After Hours Denver work together to provide useful services to the individuals within Civic Center Park.



Figure 2.8. Service volunteer sits down to speak with a person experiencing homelessness. (University of Denver, 2009)

### *After Hours Denver*

After Hours Denver is an alternative nondenominational ministry that serves the poor and homeless. The organization itself, although religiously based, is an eclectic group of individuals from business professionals, to college students, to homeless individuals themselves. After Hours Denver's main service feeds people sack lunches every day in Civic Center Park. The group prepares 150- 200 lunches each day. The line of people waiting for lunch starts to form around 11:45 am and the volunteers begin to serve promptly at 12:15 p.m. They also occasionally hand out articles of clothing such as long johns and socks when the resources are available (Morrison, 2015).

### *Denver Homeless Connection*

Denver's Homeless Connection is a religious organization connecting people to the services available for homeless, within the Denver region. The services include shelters, food banks, employment opportunity, traveler's aid, and addiction recovery. They also provide a directory for the non-homeless looking to donate food and clothing (Denver Healing Ministries, 2016).

### *Denver Homeless Out Loud*

Denver Homeless Out Loud is an organization that supports the homeless by looking at the effects of the urban camping ban, and helping to protect and advocate for the dignity, rights, and choices for people experiencing homelessness (Denver Homeless Out Loud, 2016). Recently, the organization sued the City of Denver for the inhumane treatment of the homeless. The report declared that during a city-wide sweep city workers seized blankets, cell phones and other property. Harassment by police officers does happen when people are found sleeping on the streets (McGhee, 2016).

Although this is not a complete list of all the services provided it does start to show what the people and the city are trying to do in order to address homelessness. Many of these services prioritize the simple action of offering support whether that is through sack lunches or self-empowering educational programs. As for the City of Denver the top priority is focused on expanding affordable housing options and mental health services (City of Denver, 2016). Both scales of work are necessary for positive change in the lives of Denver's homeless.



## *Homelessness Centered Design*

Landscape architects' involvement with homelessness can occur on many different levels. Policy making, land-use mapping, education, material studies, and site design are all ways landscape architects can address the growing social issue (Leonard, 2016). Projects that have had notable success in designing for the homeless have been featured in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* (LAM).

The first project is Triangle Park, about a mile north of Denver's Civic Center Park. It is a small, awkwardly shaped plot of land that hosts many people experiencing homelessness because it is adjacent to two homeless services.

StudioINSITE was the landscape architecture firm that took on the challenges of the park. Their goal was to design a resilient park that could become a place of dignity for people experiencing homelessness (Jost, 2009).

One of the initial problems for the park was that it embarrassed the surrounding community for two reasons. First, the extremely poor conditions of the park make it uninhabitable and inhumane for those who used the park. Second, the homeless were constantly visible to the rest of the community

and therefore an eyesore (Jost, 2009).

To redesign the park meant the firm had to understand the existing site. StudioINSITE involved all people, including the homeless, through public hearings, and interviews. The built park contained durable hardscape materials and resilient plantings, but still required continuous maintenance as most heavily used parks do (Jost, 2009). After about a year the excitement wore off and maintenance did not keep up with the demands of the park, and it quickly resorted to its previous condition.

Today, Triangle Park is a fenced off community garden with restricted access. This has been seen by Denver as the "best" solution to clean up a park. However, this method does not keep the park public.

The second project was Oppenheimer Park, located in Japantown, Vancouver. The park has for many years been a refuge for homeless, with approximately 150 - 200 homeless people living in tents. Recently, the city became concerned with the camps and the safety of the park and decided to redesign the park for more universal use. Space2place was the landscape architecture firm that took on the challenge of addressing safety

in Oppenheimer Park. Space2place decided to embrace the people experiencing homelessness in the park and saw it as an opportunity to research and conduct spatial studies to fully understand how the park might be designed successfully to both include the homeless and create a safe environment (Arvidson, 2015). Their conclusion was to create a park with no hard corners and that was visually open. These components encouraged safety through surveillance, a concept that has been widely explored on various site levels. The success of Oppenheimer Park comes from the design team having a strong understanding of the existing conditions of the site, implementing a successful surveillance and having empathy for the individuals who called it home.

Both examples provide insight into how cities and landscape architects can design environments that are not hostile to people experiencing homelessness.

## *Importance of Inclusivity*

Inclusive environments create diverse communities. Diversity in an urban context is not difficult to come by. Often it is a natural component of city life. However, “the source of diversity, is not in the physical form of the city but in social programs.” (Fainstein, 2005, 9). Fostering a variety of programmatic uses in public spaces can start to inform diversity within communities. “I. M. Young, while not demanding that each residential area be a microcosm of the city, emphasizes the importance of providing spaces that offer the opportunity for high levels of interaction among persons of different social background.” (Fainstein, 2005, 11). This interaction is a balance and must be carefully implemented to evoke a greater understanding of other lifestyles and not to create more prejudice. “Diversity underlies the appeal of the urban, it fosters creativity, it can encourage tolerance, and it leads city officials to see the value in previously under appreciated lifestyles.” (Fainstein, 2005, 13). These are also the connections between diversity and economic success.

Diversity in cities can also be a factor in the safety of public spaces, “a mixture of uses, if it is to be sufficiently complex to sustain city

safety, public, contact and cross-use, needs an enormous diverse of ingredients.” (Jacobs, 1961, 144). There are four conditions for diversity on the streets and in districts. The first is that the space needs to serve more than one primary function, potentially more than two. These functions should insure that people who experience the outdoors on different schedules and different purposes will be able to use many of the same facilities. The second condition is to provide several opportunities for an individual to take a different path or turn in a different direction. The third is the context architecture must vary in the economic yield they produce. Finally, the last condition is that there must be a dense concentration of people (Jacobs, 1961). It is also important to note that areas of already existing diversity permit and stimulates more diversity itself (Jacobs, 1961).



Figure 2.9. An adaptive use of the city's infrastructure provides a small amount of refuge. (Beall, 2009)



## *Safety in Public Parks*

A “safe” urban park is defined as: “a dynamic place where the design, maintenance, and policing of the park work together so that the general public perceives the park as a safe place, wants to go to the park regularly, and spends their optional time in the park engaged in valued activities. Crime and disorder is limited, and diverse usage of the park by different groups is tolerated. Legal activities are the dominant activities in the park. Because the local community values the park, it has a sense of “ownership” of it, and there are sufficient numbers of users who act as “natural guardians” to ensure informal social control. They also support formal interventions by park management and police when such interventions are necessary.” (Hilborn, 2009)

There are multiple overlapping theories on how best to obtain a safe park, many of which diverge from the traditional aspect of signs and security cameras. “Eyes on the Street,” “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design,” and “Defensible Space,” are three concepts used to increase the public’s perceived safety.

### *Eyes on the Street*

The “Eyes on the Street” theory comes from

years of studying people’s behaviors and the belief that safety is about “maintaining and supporting the vision of an open society in which people from all socioeconomic groups can move about side by side in the common room of the city as they go about their daily business” (Gehl & Rogers, 2010). The theory suggests that by bringing more people in and around the space there is a stronger sense of security through the other individuals and the perceived safety increases. Safety is heavily focused on by the private sphere, where business owners and homeowners go through various measures to keep their possession and themselves safe (Gehl & Rogers, 2010). Public spaces are handled differently because it is difficult, if not unethical, to make a public space exclusive to the desired or “safe” population (Gehl & Rogers, 2010).

### *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*

The second theory is CPTED or crime prevention through environmental design, which states that the design of a spatial environment can influence the way people behave and therefore impacts the occurrence of crime and people’s

perceived safety. CPTED is not intended to be a crime prevention solution, but instead focuses on the factors that can be manipulated by the environment to provide a better perception of safety, such as higher visibility. The term environment refers to the physical and social surroundings (Crowe & Fennelly, 2013), and therefore is important for designers to consider both the physical and social components to creating safe spaces. CPTED has developed three strategies:

1. Natural access control
2. Natural surveillance
3. Territorial reinforcement

Natural access control uses physical design elements to allocate a specific area for one intended user or a group of users. The design elements could include hard barriers such as fences or walls or soft barriers such as shrubs. Natural surveillance is similar to “eyes on the street” and provides viewsheds that allow people to see and be seen and encourages more people on site. Territorial reinforcement uses sidewalks, porches and other design elements to help

delineate the public and private realms (Crowe & Fennelly, 2013).

#### *Defensible Spaces*

Defensible spaces focus on the strategy of natural surveillance and the ability to observe the public areas and to feel under observation by others while in the space. People watching is a more accurate way to define natural surveillance. It reduces the irrational fears and anxieties that can occur when in a public space alone. The overall concept of defensible spaces is to create safer environments by having higher trafficked areas, which provides more security through intensive use (Newman, 1975).

All three of these theories suggest that the key to a safe public space is having high visibility and density of other people.

## *Types of Interactions in Public Space*

Jan Gehl studied the interactions of people in public spaces in his book *Life Between Buildings*. He focused on human activities and breaks them down into three different categories: necessary, optional, and social. Social activities can be further broken down into active contact, such as children playing or people talking directly, and passive contact as in hearing and seeing other people. "Although the physical framework does not have a direct influence on the quality, content, and intensity of social contacts, architects and planners can affect the possibilities for meeting, seeing, and hearing people- possibilities that both take on a quality of their own and become important as backgrounds and starting point for other forms of contact." (Gehl, 2011, 13). These activities make the communal spaces both meaningful and attractive.

There are high intensity and low intensity interactions that take place in public spaces. Interaction with the homeless is often on the lower end of the spectrum with passive contact and chance contact. Low intensity contact gives a way for other forms of contacts to grow, developing a network within a community. Stimulation can

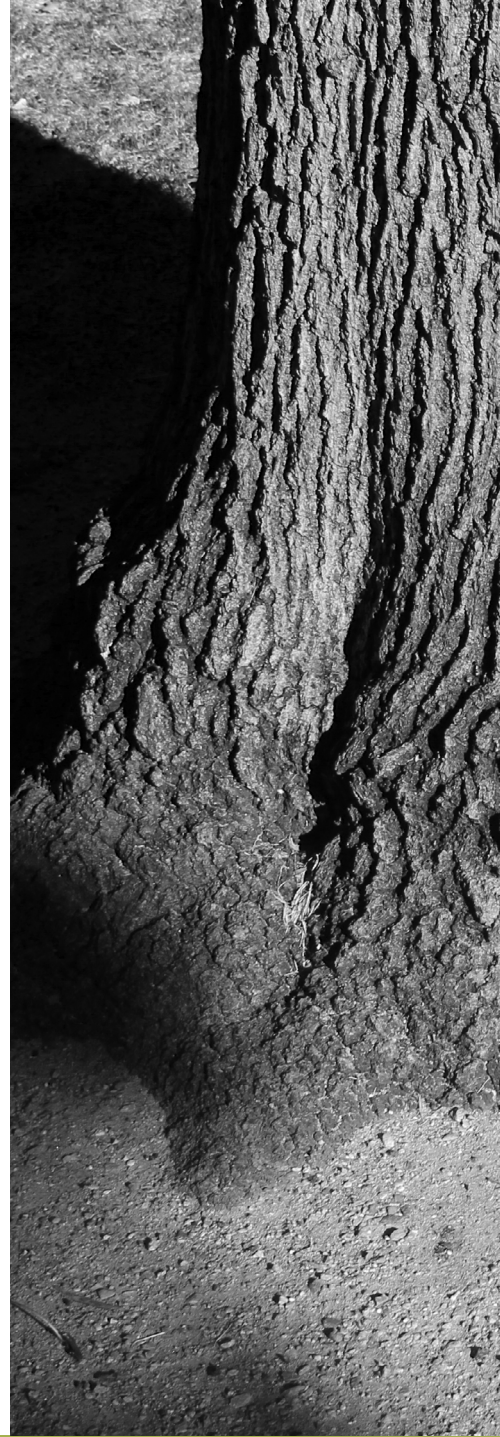
be brought about by programmatic activities, but can also be brought by frequent circulation of people. People are attracted to other people, and as designers we have some influence on the program activities, but more on comfort level of the space that dictates how long people stay there. The infrastructure that is preferred for most interactions tend to be more social with benches facing towards activities and paths going through more active spaces (Gehl, 2011).

Encouraging social and passive interactions in public spaces can be a start as a framework for integrating the homeless back into a community. In doing so, it can create diversity, intensive use, and opportunity to rebuild a social resilience against episodic and chronic homelessness. As landscape architects, we can make informed design decision that activate the space for longer periods of time, as well as provide basic human amenities.



Figure 2.10. Because there is high diversity in the park, capitalizing on it can be an asset to the park. (Denver Post,2013)





# chapter 3





Methodology





# Overview

The project's methodology was a combination of evaluation and projective design of Denver's Civic Center Park. The methods consisted of semi-structured interviews, observation, site inventory and analysis, and critical mapping. These methods were selected to better understand:

1. The existing approaches to dealing with the homeless in Denver's Civic Center Park as well as city wide approaches to dealing with homeless in Denver and in public parks in general.
2. The spatial relationships between different demographic groups and their activities within Denver's Civic Center Park.
3. How the infrastructure (micro-level: benches, lighting, bathrooms, etc.) (macro-level: emergency services and land-use) in Denver's Civic Center Park and the surrounding neighborhoods impact the people experiencing homelessness.



## *Methods Overview*

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Interviewing public officials that have knowledge and experience with the park were the first step of the process, followed by agencies and organizations that are actively involved with addressing homelessness in Denver. Next, a privately practicing landscape architect that has worked on Triangle Park in Denver was interviewed.

Additional interviews were also conducted on site. The intention of these interviews were to ask the users of the site what was successful about the park and what could be improved. The individuals that were interviewed were those waiting in line for a free-lunch in the park.

A list of individuals and agencies that were interviewed can be found on page 52-53.

### *Critical Mapping*

Another step included critical mapping of the site and the context. These maps documented the public transportation infrastructure as well as the local homeless services. A more detailed description of the mapping process is on page 50.

### *Observations*

On-site observations documented the interactions between people experiencing homelessness and housed people, as well as the general activities that took place within the boundaries of the park. The site observations were conducted using behavior mapping, active and passive interaction observations, time in space counting, and location mapping. A more detailed description can be found on page 54-60.

### *Site Inventory*

Site inventory included recording locations of infrastructure and amenities, as well as traces. Documentation was conducted through field notes and photography. A list of the design elements and details that were documented can be found on page 61.



Figure 3.1. Observation Locations. (Bernal, 2016)

## *Site Boundaries*

The observation, site inventory and analysis used the boundary of Civic Center Park as shown in Figure 3.2. For the purpose of this report none of the surrounding public spaces including Lincoln Park (east of Civic Center Park) were included in observations or site analysis. It is important to explain that there is a social difference between the two parks. Civic Center Park is known to be more passive and a place to relax, where Lincoln Park tends to have more illegal activities, such as drug deals. Because of the size and current programmatic changes, Civic Center Park is more compatible to become a more inclusive and diverse park.

## *Critical Mapping*

The data collected focused on homeless services (such as shelters, soup kitchens, medical care facilities) and the public transportation infrastructure. Mapping the homeless services and public transportation provided insight into why there is a great number of people experiencing homelessness in the Civic Center Park.

For critical mapping the surrounding neighborhoods directly adjacent to the park were examined. The four surrounding neighborhoods are:

1. Civic Center
2. Capitol Hill
3. North Capitol Hill
4. Central Business District

The park is located within the Civic Center Neighborhood.



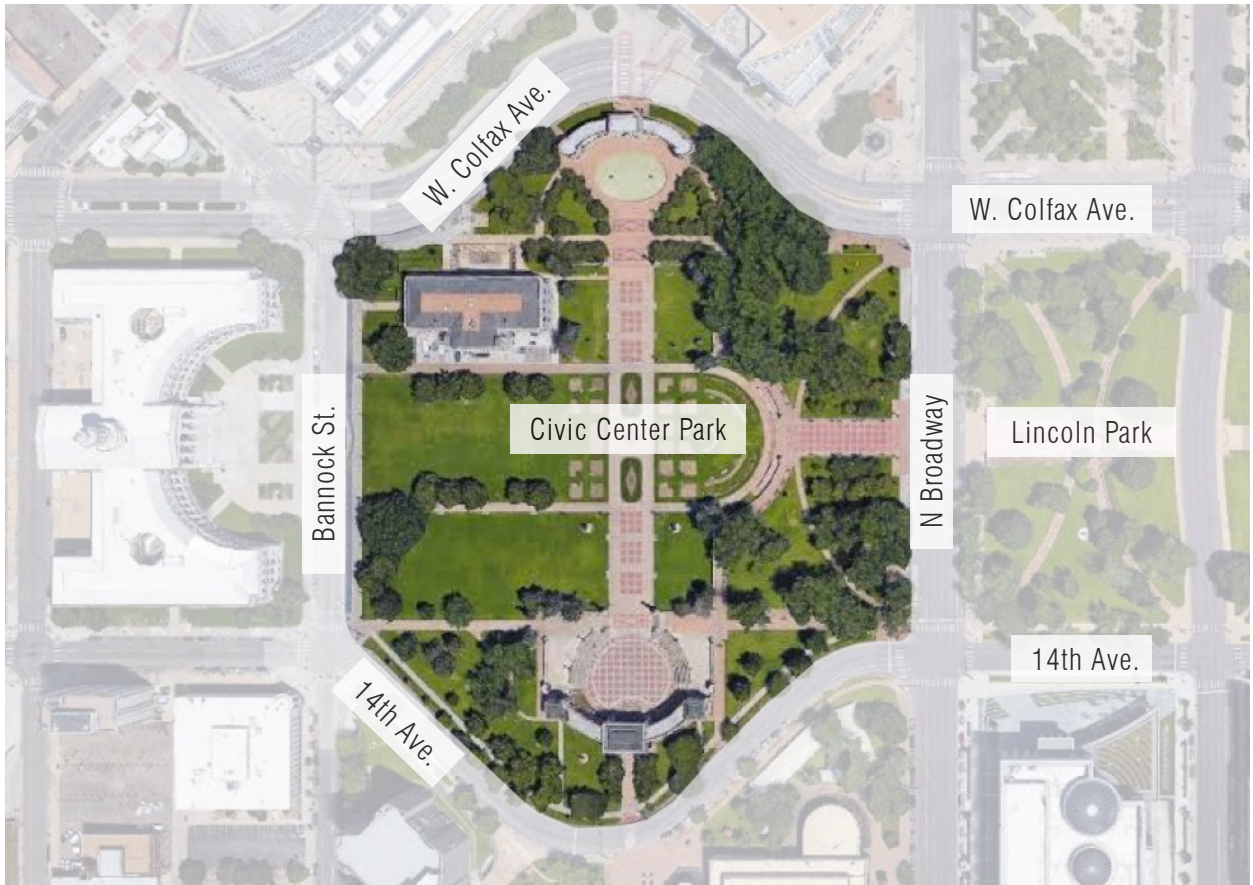


Figure 3.2. Site boundaries of Denver's Civic Center Park. (Adapted from: Google Earth, 2016)



## *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The first set of interviews were with public officials, non-profit organizations, and private agencies directly associated with Denver's Civic Center Park or Denver's homelessness. Table 3.1. lists the interview questions. Each interview was between 20 and 60 minutes long.

The individuals and organizations were:

1. Scott Gilmore. Denver's Park and Recreation: Department Head.
2. Travis Smith. Impact Locally: Homeless non-profit.
3. Cole Chandler. Hunger Free Colorado: Hunger non-profit that works closely with the city.
4. Carrie Atiyeh. Visit Denver: Tourism non-profit that works closely with the city.
5. Benjamin Dunning. Denver Homeless Out Loud: Homeless advocacy group.
6. Nathan Hunt. Alternative Solutions Advocacy Project: committee looking at alternatives for the urban camping ban.

The second set of interviews took place with a landscape architect who worked with Triangle Park, a park that consistently has many people experiencing homelessness congregating there. Table 3.2. lists questions for the interview.

Individual interviewed:

1. Dennis Rubba. studioINSITE: Landscape Architect.

The final set of interviews with park users was conducted on Sunday, March 19, 2017 and Friday March 24, 2017. Both started at 11:30 am and lasted about 30 minutes each day. Each individual response ranged from a brief one word requests to about a 5 minute conversation and were conducted within the park. Sunday March 19, 2017 was a sunny day with a high of 80°F. Friday March 24, 2017 was a chillier day with a high of 53°F and half an inch of precipitation. Twenty-eight interviews took place between two days. The majority were male and all were waiting in line for a free lunch within the park. No further demographic information about the interviewees was recorded. The interview questions are noted in Table 3.3.

Audio recordings took place only in the interviews with the professionals directly associated with Denver's Civic Center Park or Denver's homelessness. These audio recordings were used as a note taking tool and were confidential to all other people besides the interviewer.

## Agencies Interview Questions

How do we create safer environments?
What are the resources available for the homeless and how affective are they?
What term do you use to refer to people on the streets or living in the parks?
How do you identify the homeless? By clothes, behavior...?
What are your goals in addressing homelessness? 1 yr, 5 yrs, 10 yrs?
What are your existing strategies set in place in reaching these goals?
Have you worked with homelessness specifically in Denver's Civic Center Park? If so what did you find? What were some of your experiences?
What are some of the general public's perceptions on homelessness?
How have you seen homelessness grow either in Denver's Civic Center Park or Denver as a whole?
Do you think there is a direct correlation between the public's safety and homelessness?
How do we create safer environments?

Table 3.1. Interview questions for public and private agencies and non-profits. (Bernal, 2016)

## Landscape Architect Interviews

What term do you use to refer to people on the streets or living in the parks?
How do you identify the homeless? By clothes, behavior...?
Do you think there is a direct correlation between the public's safety and homelessness?
How do we create safer environments?
How did your team decide to address the homeless population in the park and why?
What were the challenges your team did not predict/ foresee when starting the project?
What was your relationship with the homeless, was there any direct correspondence?
What was your relationship with public officials, and what was their input on the matter of addressing homelessness in the parks?
What type of research was completed before addressing homelessness?

Table 3.2. Interview questions for landscape architect that worked on Triangle Park, in Denver. (Bernal, 2016)

## Park Users Interview Questions

What areas do you tend to prefer and why?
What areas do you avoid and why?
What amenities could be added to make the park accessible and enjoyable for all people?
How do you use the park?

Table 3.3. Interview questions for people in line for a free lunch in Denver's Civic Center Park. (Bernal, 2016)

## Observations

Site observations were conducted using behavior mapping, homeless interaction observations, time in space counting, traces, and location mapping. Data collection took place on Friday, October 21 and Saturday, October 22, 2016 from 8:30 am–3:30 pm. These dates were chosen based on availability as well as avoiding any large scale event that might skew any data. The data collected was used for analysis to determine the spatial relationships that exist between different demographic groups and the activities within the park.

Three individuals made observations of six key areas within the site. Each person had two areas of focus. These areas were the North Plaza, the Northeast Terrace, the Central Corridor, the West Lawn, the Greek Amphitheater and the Southern Walkway. These locations are seen on Figure 3.3. One individual conducted a record

of traces throughout the park at the end of each day. Throughout the day the three individuals recorded their observations on forms focusing on behavior mapping, active and passive interaction observations, and time in space counting. A daily schedule for each observer is shown in Table 3.4. Each observation besides traces and location mapping were conducted for 30 minutes, two times per day. Traces were conducted at the end of each day and location mapping was conducted for 5 minutes at a time providing a snapshot of the people in the space.

The schedule of the different observations can be seen in Table 3.4 for both October 21 and October 22, 2016. The weather was warm for both days of observations. On October 21, the high was 78°F and a low of 37°F. On October 22, the high was 82°F and a low of 41°F.

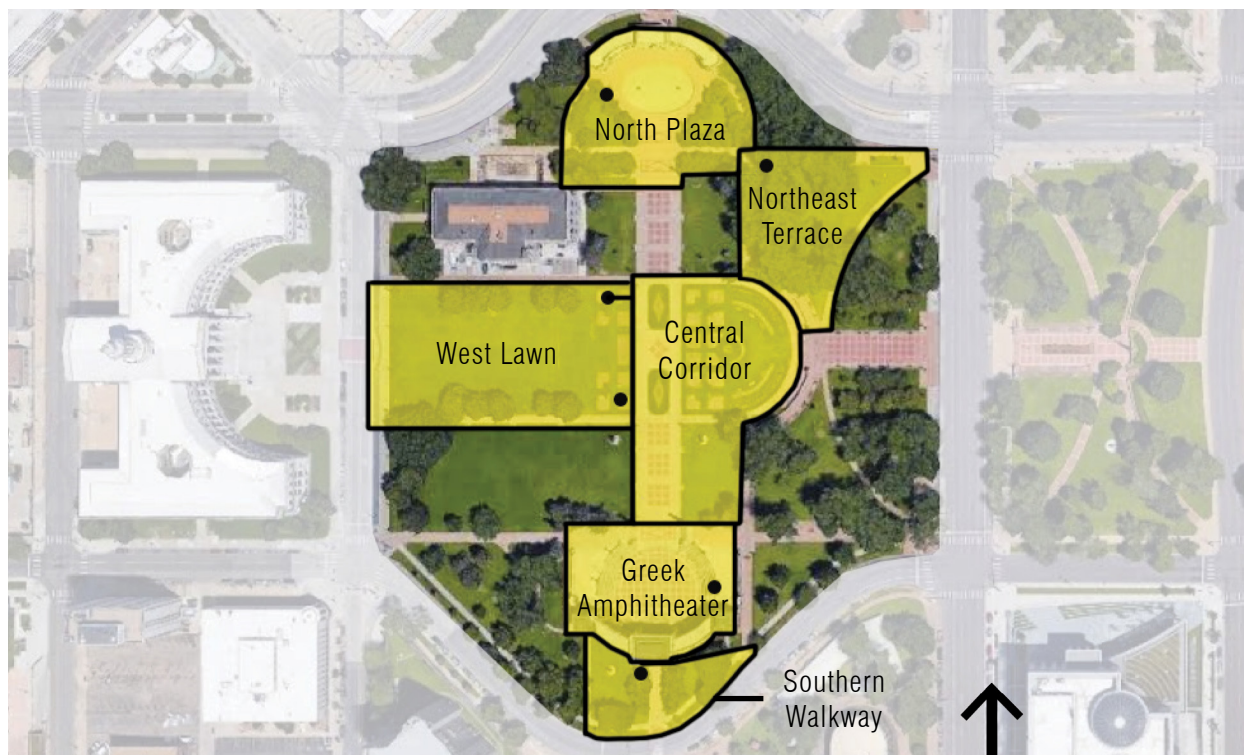


Figure 3.3. Observation locations and the boundaries associated with each space. (Adapted from: Google Earth, 2016)

Observation Schedule for October 21-22, 2016

Time	Observer 1	Observer 2	Observer 3
8:00 am	Behavior Mapping	Observation	Time in Space
9:00 am			
9:15 am	Observation	Time in Space	Behavior Mapping
10:15 am			
10:20 am	Time in Space	Behavior Mapping	Observation
11:20 am			
11:30 am	Behavior Mapping	Observation	Time in Space
12:30 pm			
12:35 pm	Observation	Time in Space	Behavior Mapping
1:35 pm			
1:40 pm	Time in Space	Behavior Mapping	Observation
2:40 pm			
2:45 pm	Traces/Inventory	---	---
3:15 pm			

Table 3.4. Observation Schedule. (Bernal, 2016)

Location Mapping should be recorded periodically throughout the day. It should only take a few minutes and should occur in between cycles. The time and location should be recorded directly on the sheet.

Each observer rotates between two locations on the site, ie. Observer 1 will be in the Northeast Terrace in the morning of October 21, 2016 and then in the North Plaza in the afternoon.



Behavior Mapping

The number of people participating in activities and where these activities occurred was documented. Activities included walking leisurely, walking for exercise, running, other physical workout, sitting alone, sitting in a group, eating alone, eating in a group, playing music/ entertaining, playing sports or games, sleeping, and playing music/entertainment. There were also blank columns if none of the other categories fitted. Table 3.5. was used to record this data.

Behavior Mapping

Observer:

Date:

Location:

Time:

Person #	Sex		Age						Activities																				
	Male	Female	0 - 6	7 - 18	18 - 34	35 - 50	51 - 65	over 65	walking leasurely	walking for excersize	running	playing a game/ sport	stationary workout	sitting alone	sitting in group	eating alone	eating in group	sleeping	playing music/ entertainment										
1																													
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Table 3.5. Handout for on-site behavior mapping. (Bernal, 2016)

Active and Passive Interaction Observations

The types of interactions between the homeless and other individuals was noted as well as when they occurred. Interactions such as greeting, panhandling, conversations, and services were recorded. Table 3.6. was used to record this data.

Observation

Observer:

Date:

Location:

Time:

Time of the observation. Hour/Minute (9:47 am)	Write a short discription of the observation. Focus observations on interactions between percieved street people and housed individuals

Table 3.6. Handout for on-site active and passive interaction observations. (Bernal, 2016)

Time in Space Counting

The length of time individuals spent in a space was recorded. People walking by were also counted. People who were already on site before the data collection starts were recorded. Table 3.7. was used to record this data.

How Many? How Long?

Observer:  
Location:

Date:  
Time:

Time in Space	Tallies	Notes (start/end time of person and short discription ie:color of shirt)
Passer-By's		
1-4:59 min.		
5-9:59 min.		
10-19:59 min.		
20-24:59 min.		
25-29:59 min.		
30 + min.		

Table 3.7. Handout for on-site time in space counting. (Bernal, 2016).

## Traces

Traces are any objects or site conditions that might indicate other activities that have occurred outside the observation period. Examples include an abundance of cigarette butts, “cow paths” or an empty bottle. Traces were documented by one individual. Figure 3.4 was used to record this data.

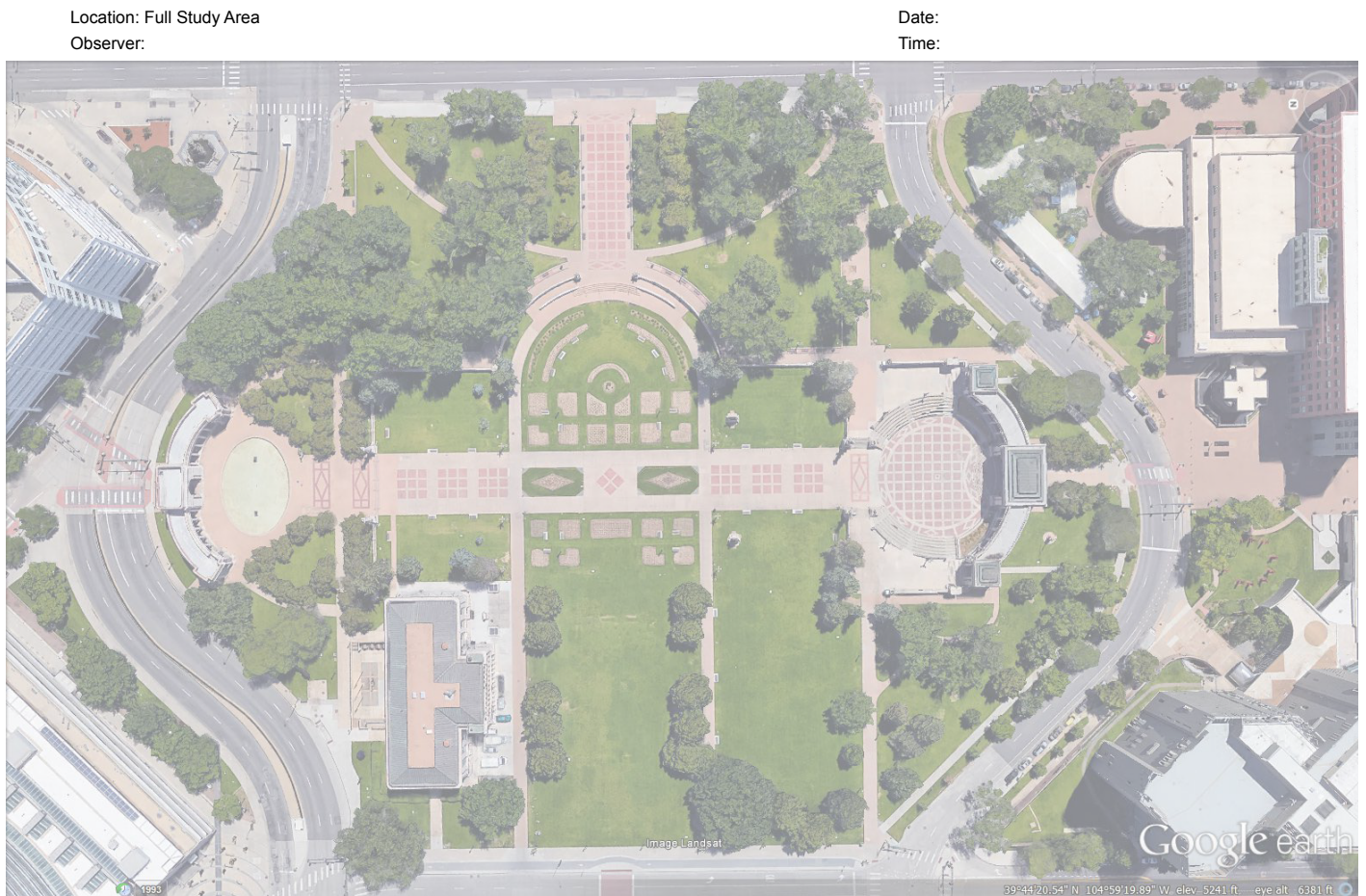


Figure 3.4. Handout for on-site traces notes. (Adapted from: Google Earth, 2016).



## Location Mapping

Location mapping documents where people are located on site. The location of individuals judged to be homeless by the observer were indicated on the map by an "X" and others (i.e. non-homeless) a dot. Blue indicates males and red indicates females. Figure 3.5 is an example of one of the locations that was used to record this data. People who had multiple bags with them or appeared to lack normal hygiene were judged as someone experiencing homelessness. These can be signs of homelessness and although not always accurate, they were used to assess the existing users.



Figure 3.5. Handout for on-site location mapping. (Adapted from: Google Earth, 2016).

## Site Inventory

Site inventory took place on Friday, October 21 and Saturday, October 22, 2016. Although the infrastructure and amenities were not predicted to change over the two-day period, the site inventory was conducted twice to help reduce mistakes. The design elements included: benches, walkways, bike paths, parking areas, light fixtures, park signs, trash cans/ dumpsters, water fountains, bathrooms, statues, amphitheater, terraces, gardens, and any buildings located on site. Figure 3.6 was used to record this data.

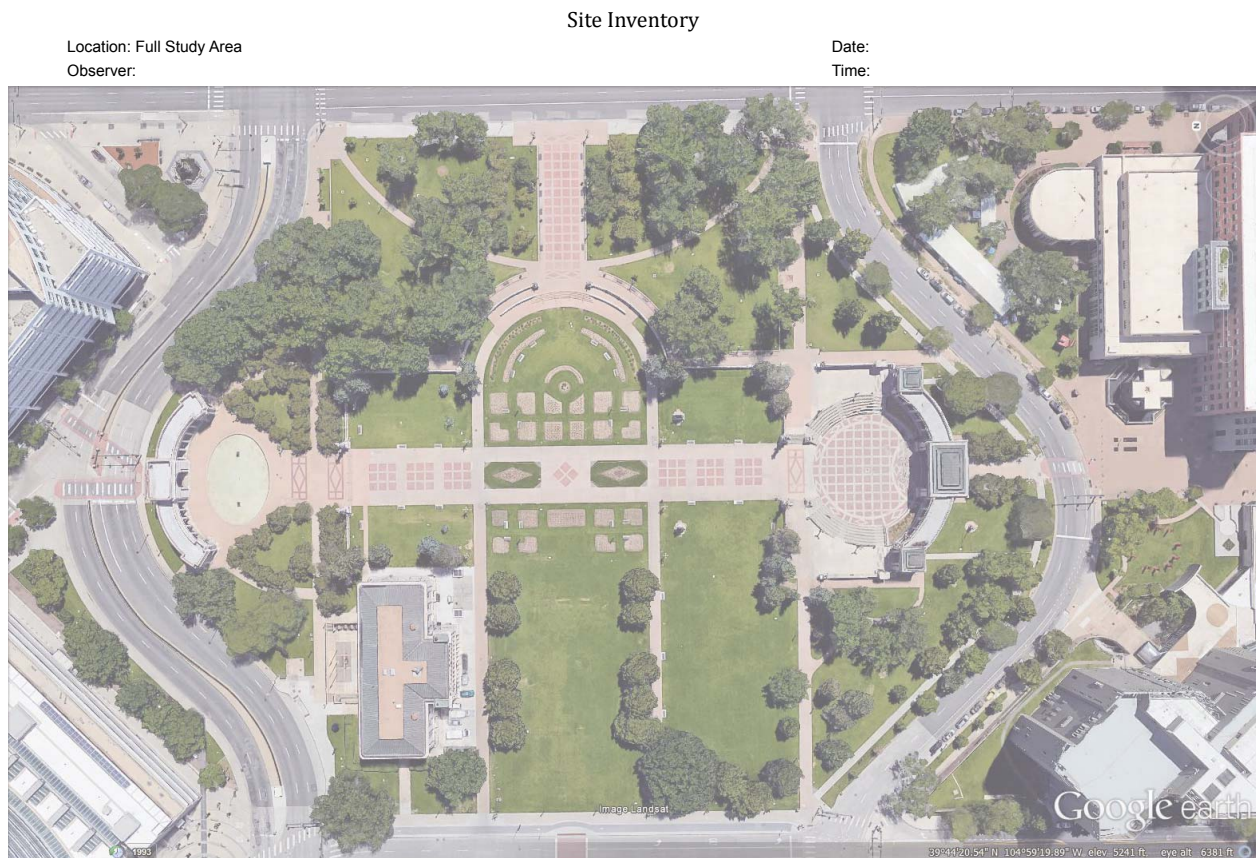


Figure 3.6. Handout for on-site site inventory. (Adapted from: Google Earth, 2016).



# chapter

# 4





# Findings





# Overview

After conducting seven interviews with different governmental agencies, non-profits, and a landscape architecture firm in the Denver area, many common themes emerged from the discussions. Understanding both the problems faced by Denver's homeless, as well as the problems faces by the city when dealing with Denver's homelessness are essential to providing a solution. Discussions about existing "solutions" to address Denver's homeless lead to conversations about what is not working, what is working, and what else can be done.

Interviews with 28 park users revealed the existing successes and desires for the park. Many said the park is a comfortable place to relax, but desired basic amenities such as a bathroom and drinking water.

The site observations and inventory revealed the same. Many people were using the park as a place to lay down or talk with friends. However, two porta-pottys and a seasonal drinking fountain did not appear to meet the demands of the users.

## Interviews

### *Reasons for Denver's Homelessness*

#### Interviews with:

Scott Gilmore-Denver's Parks and Recreation  
Benjamin Dunning-Denver's Homeless Out Loud  
Travis Smith-Impact Locally  
Cole Chandler-Hunger-Free Colorado

Denver is similar to many other cities in that today's homelessness originated during the Reagan Era when the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the main government supporter of subsidized housing for the poor, cut 75% of funding for affordable housing. Cole Chandler from Hunger-Free Colorado explains, that as a result homelessness rose exponentially from the time it was cut to the end of Reagan's term. The development of the shelter system that exists today, originated shortly after the Reagan Era to provide a temporary emergency support, not a replacement for affordable housing. At the same time the number and size of jails and prisons began to grow as society chose to institutionalize people experiencing homelessness through incarceration.

"Denver has had a 1.6 population growth rate between 2010 and 2015" (Metro Denver, 2017). While the city continues to be one of the fastest growing cities in the United State, it is also seeing the number of people experiencing homelessness increase (Denver Rescue Mission, 2017). However, advocates for the homeless believe that this relationship is more complex than just a larger population meaning a larger homeless population.

Travis Smith from Impact Locally argued that the real problem is the increase in average rental rates, which creates challenges for people who have lived in rented homes for years and find themselves no longer able to afford the rent.

Smith went on to say that a common misconception about Denver's homeless is that after marijuana was legalized in 2012, the homeless started to move to Denver to take advantage of this new law. In reality the increase in homelessness did not come from the homeless moving here. Instead it came from young college graduates moving to the city, which increased the demand for rental properties. The greater demand for housing led to increased rental rates, when tenants were only given 30-60 days notice to move or to figure out how to pay the higher rent, many people were forced out of their homes.

There are many other misconceptions about homelessness. For example, people experiencing homelessness are not just those living on the streets. They are also people who do not have the stability of a lease and therefore are living in cars, at family/friends' homes, or in churches. There are many types of homelessness and many which are

not visible to the public eye. The accuracy of HUD's annual point in time survey of people experiencing homelessness is drastically reduced due to the difficulty of measuring something you cannot see. Smith explained that the survey in 2016 accounted for about 6,700 people experiencing homelessness when in reality that number is believed to be about four times higher, or as much at 23,00 people.

Another common misconception is that the homeless were pushed to the streets because they are mentally ill and addicted to drugs and or alcohol. Chandler argued that this is not necessarily true. It is possible that the harsh conditions of the street force people to drugs and alcohol, and the experience of losing a home can lead to people being depressed or anxious, or exacerbating mental diseases. The roots of homelessness are systemic and often stem from childhood environments. A child growing up homeless has a much higher chance of experiencing homelessness later in life. The common perception that people experiencing homelessness are dangerous or undesirable has lead cities to push them out, or hide people living on the streets. The term NIMBY, Not In My Backyard, is commonly used in discussions about

local homeless services. People want to help, but do not want it to affect their daily routines or property value.

When asked how the public's perception has changed over the last few years, Benjamin Dunning from Denver's Homeless Out Loud responded, "The public perception of homelessness has not changed and that is the problem. When your first reaction to someone sleeping in the streets is to call the police there is a problem. When the city leaders talk about homelessness and drug addiction/ mental illnesses together as if they are the same thing then there is a perception problem". Although there is a connection between substance abuse/mental illnesses and homelessness they are not the same problem. This misconception has led to a negative perception of all people experiencing homelessness and seeing all people living on the streets as dangerous people.

Another misconception is the assumption that the homeless are lazy, when 40% of people in shelters have jobs. Scott Gilmore Department Head of Denver's Parks and Recreation explained that the problem does not stem from lazy individuals taking advantage of the system, but instead from



the system itself. After an individual becomes homeless, it is increasingly more difficult to either keep an existing job or to be hired for a new job. Obvious reasons include a lack of access for personal hygiene and not having a secure place to keep their belongings. "The system is broken" said Gilmore, referring to the complex issues that make it difficult to receive help from homeless services or to get out of homelessness itself.





Figure 4.1. People sleeping on 16th st. Mall before the urban camping ban was enacted. (antonyindenver, 2012)

## *Attempts at Solutions*

Interviews with:

Carrie Atiyeh-Visit Denver

Benjamin Dunning-Denver's Homeless Out Loud

Cole Chandler-Hunger-Free Colorado

Many believe that providing enough affordable housing is how we end homelessness. In the fall of 2016, Denver passed a funding stream of \$150 million for affordable housing over the next ten years. Carrie Atiyeh from Visit Denver says many members of the city government are confident that this will lead to positive improvements in the future in addressing homelessness, but homeless advocates, such as Benjamin Dunning from Denver's Homeless Out Loud, do not believe that it will be enough.

In 2012, a more controversial solution to homelessness was passed: Denver's Urban Camping Ban. This law makes it illegal to sleep covered in any outdoor public space. Atiyeh explained that the goal of the ban was to encourage people sleeping on the streets to find shelter in Denver's shelter system, but critics of the ban claim that the ban criminalizes homelessness and pushes the marginalized population outside of the city, which some believe is the intent of the law. Cole Chandler from Hunger-Free Colorado explains that from a homeless provider's perspective, the homeless population has become dispersed making it more difficult for a service provider to find

the people they are trying to serve. This ban has created a hostile environment and mistrust between those experiencing homelessness and Denver's police who enforce it. To enforce the ban the City of Denver conducts sweeps of encampments. The law is in place to try to clean up the public spaces and get people to the services they need. However, it has become apparent that no matter what the intention of the bill was, the urban camping ban does not lead people to use emergency services. Instead it creates an endless cycle of clearing encampments one day to only be clearing them out again from a different location.





Figure 4.2. Protesters of Denver's urban camping ban. (antonyindenver, 2012)



## *Addressing Safety*

Interviews with:

Carrie Atiyeh-Visit Denver

Scott Gilmore-Denver's Parks and Recreation

Safety is a major concern in both public spaces and in the illegal encampments. The need to increase perceived safety in Denver's public space is a universally accepted idea, but how to accomplish this varies depending on who is speaking. In most public downtown areas, including Denver's Civic Center Park, the perception is the problem, especially for visitors. "Denver is a safe city and the residents know it, but people who are not used to urban environments may not feel safe." says Carrie Atiyeh from Visit Denver.

Atiyeh also explained that these negative perceptions come from aggressive panhandling, public use of marijuana, lack of cleanliness, large groups of youth, and homeless people. The existing solutions cater to the "image" of the city and the affect it has on tourist. Tourism has been growing in Denver for 10 consecutive years. Atiyeh also stated that the industry employs 55,000 people in the Denver Metro area, and is a huge economic driver of the city. In 2015, Denver had 16.4 overnight visitors who spent \$5 billion. Tourism is a valuable asset to the city and is something that cannot and should not be ignored. However the solution to homelessness should not cater to the

misconceptions that the tourist have, but should start to address their misperceptions in an honest manner.

Atiyeh also explained that some of the city's proposed plans to address safety come from a group called Downtown Denver's Partnership. They are trying to make people feel safer by gating off alleyways, increasing lighting and hiring a private security team to patrol the streets. The city is also hiring "park hosts," or people from the community, to provide an extra pair of eyes and a sense of control of the park, says Gilmore. However this solution has only been implemented a couple of times.



Figure 4.3. Increased security on 16th st. Mall is meant to increase real and perceived safety of the public space. (Xu, 2008)

## *Other Denver Parks*

Interviews with:

Dennis Rubba-Landscape Architect

Scott Gilmore-Denver's Parks and Recreation

Denver Civic Center Park is not the only park that deals with homelessness. Scott Gilmore, Department Head of Denver's Parks and Recreation described Skyline Park, another urban park a mile north of Civic Center Park. It has restrooms that were constantly being used as "private" spaces where people felt hidden enough to sleep, use drugs, or engage in sexual activities. These are some of the only public restrooms in Denver and the city was constantly struggling to keep them open. The city then hired a woman who was experiencing homelessness to monitor the restrooms and since then they have had greater success with cleanliness and safety.

Gilmore also described Sunny Lawson Park, another urban park in North Denver. The park was known for drug dealing and a hang out for "undesirable" populations. The city's first solution was to put a playground in the park in hopes that families would move in. The playground was fenced off and restricted to only families and children. However, the children did not come, and the homeless continued to congregate in the area that had not been fenced off. The city's next solution was to again fence off the little space that was

left. "We can't tell people not to be in the park so what we did was turned the area into a dog park." Gilmore said.

The problem with these solutions is that they do not reduce homelessness, they simply push it somewhere else, somewhere less visible. In doing so they also push out all other people who do not have children or dogs. The city is strategically changing public parks to cater to the desirable users, but not the needs of the community. Gilmore explained, the goal of the city was to change the culture of the park, and in their final attempt to do so they hired a park host. A local pastor now regulates the park, getting rid of the drug dealers, but allowing all other people to stay.

Triangle Park, located just a mile north of Denver's Civic Center Park, was adjacent to two homeless shelters and an affordable housing complex. It had originally been designed by a landscape architecture firm called studioINSITE in 2008 to provide dignity and comfort of those who were experiencing homelessness. Dennis Rubba, founding partner at studioINSITE, explained that the design was faced with many challenges. The first was how to design the park to be sensitive to the

context and existing users. The second challenge was how to design a highly visible park, a park that was seen as a gateway into the downtown. The third challenge was how to design the park to withstand heavy use along with little maintenance. Within a year, it had resorted back to its existing condition as a place where drug dealers would prey on the vulnerable group of homeless people. The design intentions did not last because the maintenance did not keep up with the harsh demands and the size of the park did not encourage other users to come and provide additional surveillance. After the park had resorted to its previous condition, National Geographic made a video of an undercover crack deal that occurred in Triangle Park, which led to bad publicity and another redesign of the space.

In 2014, the public park was completely fenced off and turned into a community garden. Rubba explained that the fence went almost up to the street curb cutting off most of the existing sidewalk. The homeless still congregate in the little space left and on surrounding sidewalks because this is where they wait for the shelters to open. There is an obvious need for change in these parks in order to address safety for all, but making them more restrictive is not an ethical or successful solution for a public park.

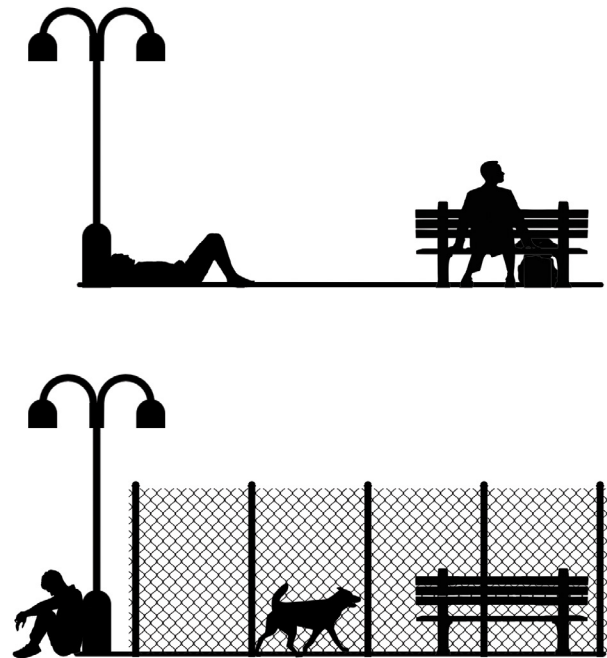


Figure 4.4. Before and after a public plaza was turned into a dog park in response to the homeless who congregated there. (Bernal, 2017)



## *Future Solutions*

Interviews with:

Nathan Hunt-Alternative Solutions Advocacy Project

A group called the Alternative Solutions Advocacy Project (ASAP) is spearheading a campaign for change. Nathan Hunt, from ASAP, explained that it is made up of faith-based groups, advocacy groups, people experiencing homelessness, business owners, and non-profit leaders, who are all trying to find an alternative to the camping ban. In 2016, a video went viral of police officers enforcing the urban camping ban by taking blankets from people sleeping on the streets in below freezing temperatures. The mayor was tagged in that video as a type of public shaming, and it led him to work with ASAP to develop an alternative plan.

The key goals of ASAP are to 1. Make the dignity and rights of people experiencing homelessness central. 2. Expand affordable housing development and create genuine community. 3. Make living outdoors as safe and hygienic as possible. And, 4. Offer smart, outreach care to those who suffer on our streets.

One of their most recent proposals is to provide Tiny Homes on land that is vacant or currently empty with intentions to be developed in the future. These temporary homes would provide a safer and more secure alternative to emergency shelters.



Figure 4.5. Temporary housing structures have the potential to provide relief to various groups of people. (Circhouse Yurt, 2017)



## *In the Park*

Nineteen of the 28 people who were interviewed in the park had one main request, and that was greater access to restrooms. Eight mentioned drinking fountains, 4 mentioned recreational activities, and 1 suggested picnic tables. Denver as a city has been aware of the lack of public bathrooms throughout the downtown and has recently conducted a pilot study. The project consists of two mobile facilities with two stalls and a urinal, as well as an attendant. The intention of the project is to both provide people in the city with a place to go the restroom, as well as figure out where the city should invest in putting permanent facilities (Pyzyk, 2017). Even though Civic Center Park has two porta-pottys, the desire for a permanent structure is overwhelming. There are specific areas within Civic Center Park that have recurring problems with public urination, such as the hidden alcoves of the Greek Amphitheater. Another common request from the people in the park was a drinking fountain. Again, there is an existing drinking fountain at the north end of the site, but because it is a free-standing fountain it must be turned off in the winter months to prevent the pipes from freezing, which leaves the park users without any running water. Other less common requests were for recreational activities, picnic tables, and storage units.

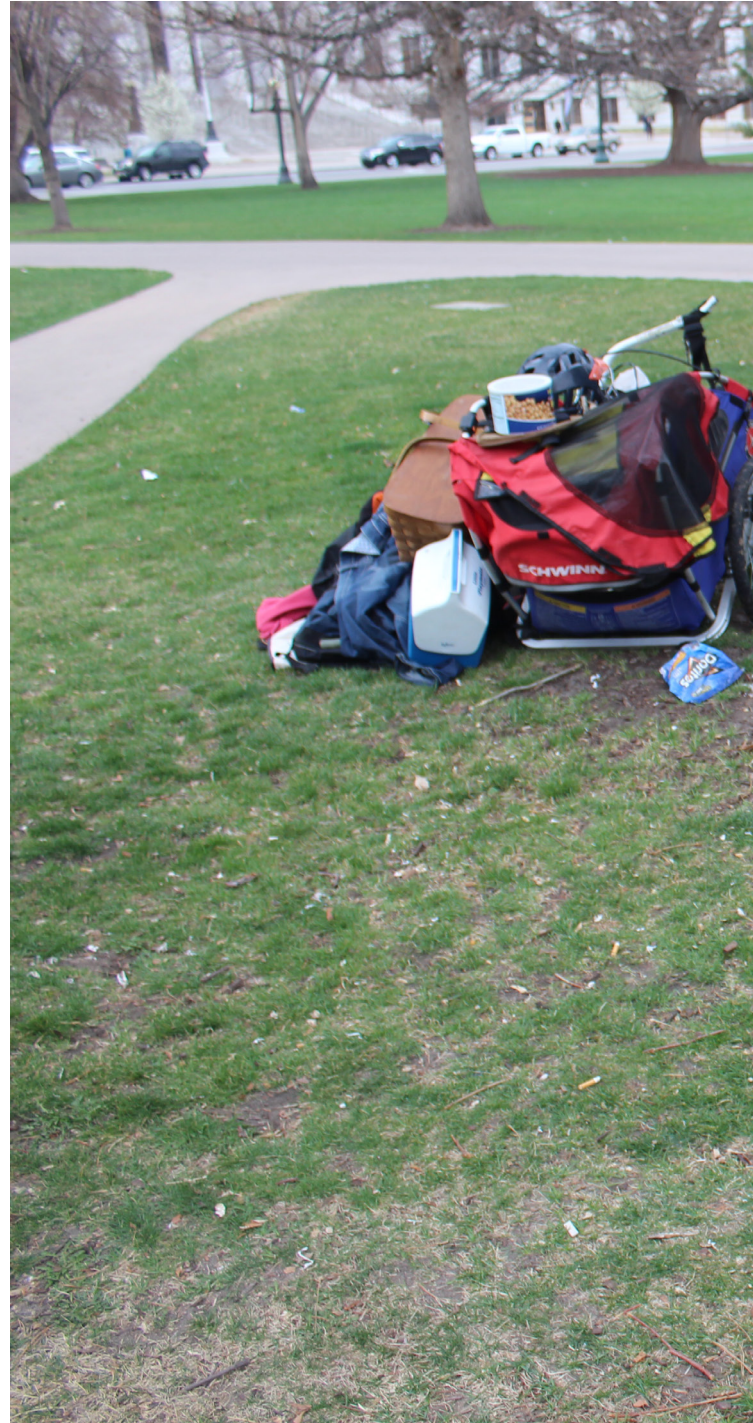






Figure 4.6. Man sitting with all his possessions in Denver's Civic Center Park. (Bernal, 2017)



## *Site Observations and Inventory*

### *Denver's Civic Center Park*

The most active period for Denver's Civic Center Park is during the weekday lunch hour from 11:30-2:00 (based on October 21 and October 22 observations). Many people pass through the park using it as a green corridor between the Golden Triangle district and downtown. People who appear to be experiencing homelessness tend to spend more time sitting and relaxing, mostly on the east lawns and amphitheater areas. The east lawn is heavily shaded and generally more quiet. There are many benches and places to spread out, and the high density of trees prevents larger group activities. The modest rise of three feet across the site makes the east lawns at a higher elevation than the west side of the site, this creates a division of space while still preserving high visibility. However the amphitheater is below street level creating less visibility of certain locations. The amphitheater has large classical columns that represent the historic nature of the park in which it was built in the City Beautiful era, and provides a backdrop for the amphitheater as well as a physical barrier from the street, but they also create some hidden areas. These hidden spaces within the amphitheater were originally

entries to interior offices, but have become unsafe and unsanitary alcoves.

Interactions between people who are experiencing homelessness and those who were not occurred 12 times over both days of observation, excluding the interactions that occurred with over a hundred people receiving a free lunch. Most interactions appeared to be friendly with the exception of one aggressive panhandler. These interactions were as simple as a friendly hello of passersby or service providers speaking to a group of homeless. There was one man who appeared to approach a stranger asking for money, who gave him some cash and they continued to talk for 5 minutes. They then left the site, together. This is an example of the types of interactions that can start to develop relationships between different socioeconomic classes.

The park was also a tourist destination during both weekdays and the weekend because of its location next to the Capitol, Court House and Denver Art Museum. Tourist were identified by taking pictures, traveling with larger groups or families, carrying water bottles and back packs. It is also a central location in the city making it easily

accessible to tourists.

The iconic structures combined with the well-maintained landscape create an attractive destination. Families as well as children and young adult groups were seen gathering in the park, making it difficult to understand how the park is still deemed unsafe and unsuccessful by numerous news articles and online reviews.

Although the park has some iconic statues and beautiful arcades, there were some traces of trash near the amphitheater and east lawn as well as articles of clothing such as jackets or shoes. Job flyers and cigarettes littered sections of the sidewalk, but generally speaking the park was fairly clean and was obviously taken care of by the city and the people who spent time there. The park has two portable restrooms on the west side of the amphitheater that remain open 24-7.

The public library, also adjacent to the site, provides a public restroom, but this is not commonly known. There is also a drinking fountain located at the north end of the site, however, it is turned off in the colder months. The drinking fountain was used on various occasions to fill up water bottles, provide water for dogs, and even to



Figure 4.7. Historic statues as well as informational signs of the park's history help to educate the public of the historic value of the park. (Bernal, 2016)

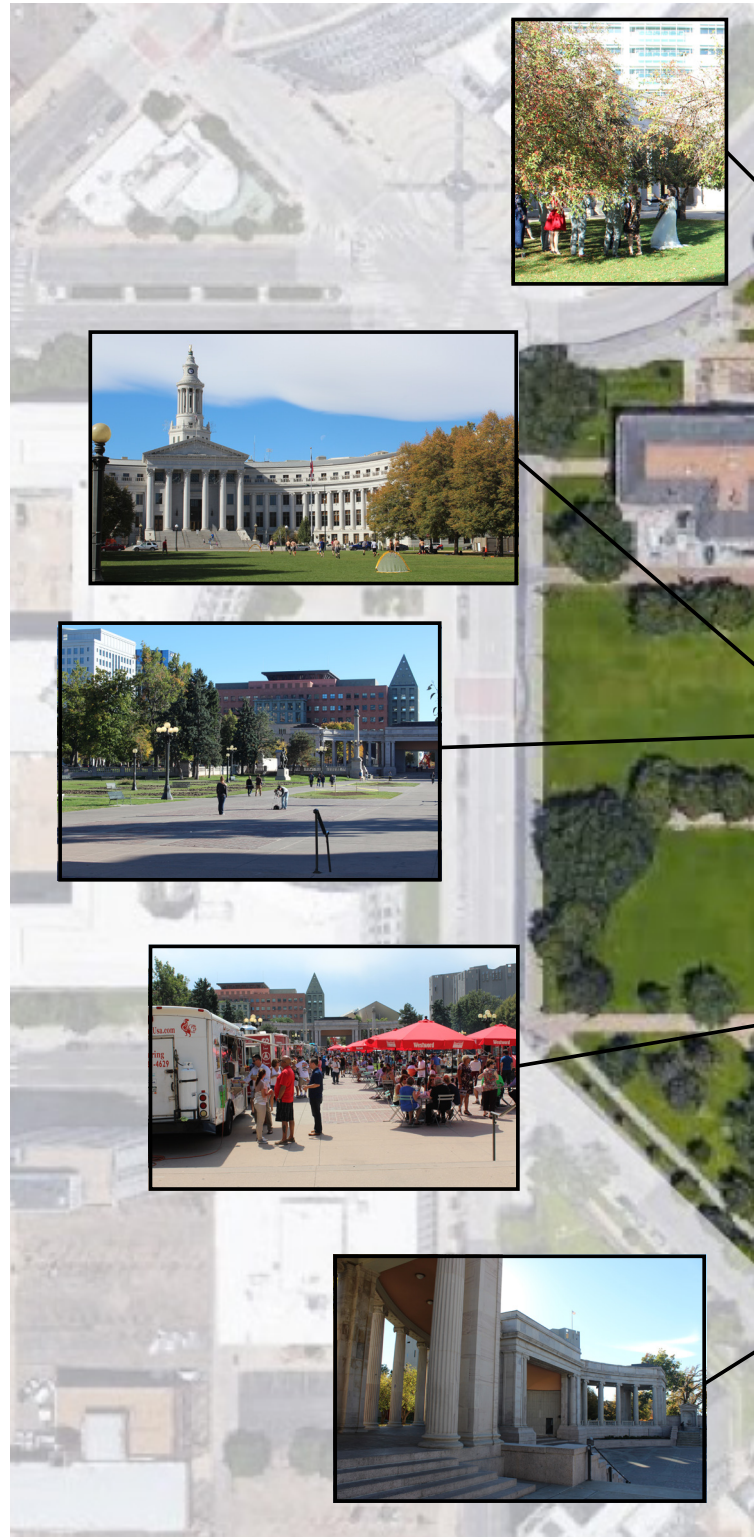
wash clothes. One man was observed spending 40 minutes at the drinking fountain washing clothes and hanging them to dry on an adjacent tree.

The central north/south walkway is used primarily as a corridor. The west lawn was used for larger group activities and recreational games. As a result, few people spent time lying or resting near these highly active spaces.

There is a homeless service event everyday that provides sacked lunches for whomever is in line, until they run out. This event starts exactly at noon just south of the amphitheater along the central pathway. It is a non-profit group that comes everyday of the year to hand out lunches to the hungry. There is an obvious need for these services in this park or near this park, but the infrastructure does not support them in a convenient and efficient way.

After studying the park and observing the different interactions, it is clear that it is a safe environment during the day. It is the public's negative perception of the homeless in the park that make it feel unsafe.

Figure 4.8. Site inventory images help illustrate the activities that take place in the park. (Bernal, 2016). (Adapted from: Google Earth, 2016)









## Real Safety of Civic Center Park

The crime rate in Civic Center in comparison to other parts of the city is average and can be seen in Figure 4.9 (Trulia,2017). A study of the types of crime on streets adjacent to or in the Denver's Civic Center Park was completed through the use of the city's Crime Reports website (Crime Reports, 2017). Over a 6-month period (August 14th, 2016 to February 10th, 2017) the Denver Police reported 181 crimes. Most (133) of the crimes were considered quality of life crimes, consisting of public order crimes, disturbing the peace, liquor possession and drug possession. Thirty-seven were property crimes including criminal trespassing, theft, and graffiti. Eleven of the 181 reported crimes were violent. Seven of these were simple assault usually charged as a misdemeanor. Two were robberies, 1 was a domestic violence assault and 1 was assault with the threat to injure (Figure 4.10). The breakdown of the criminal activity reveals that the park is fairly safe. It is also important to point out that often times people experiencing homelessness are victims of many of these crimes,not those passing through during the day.

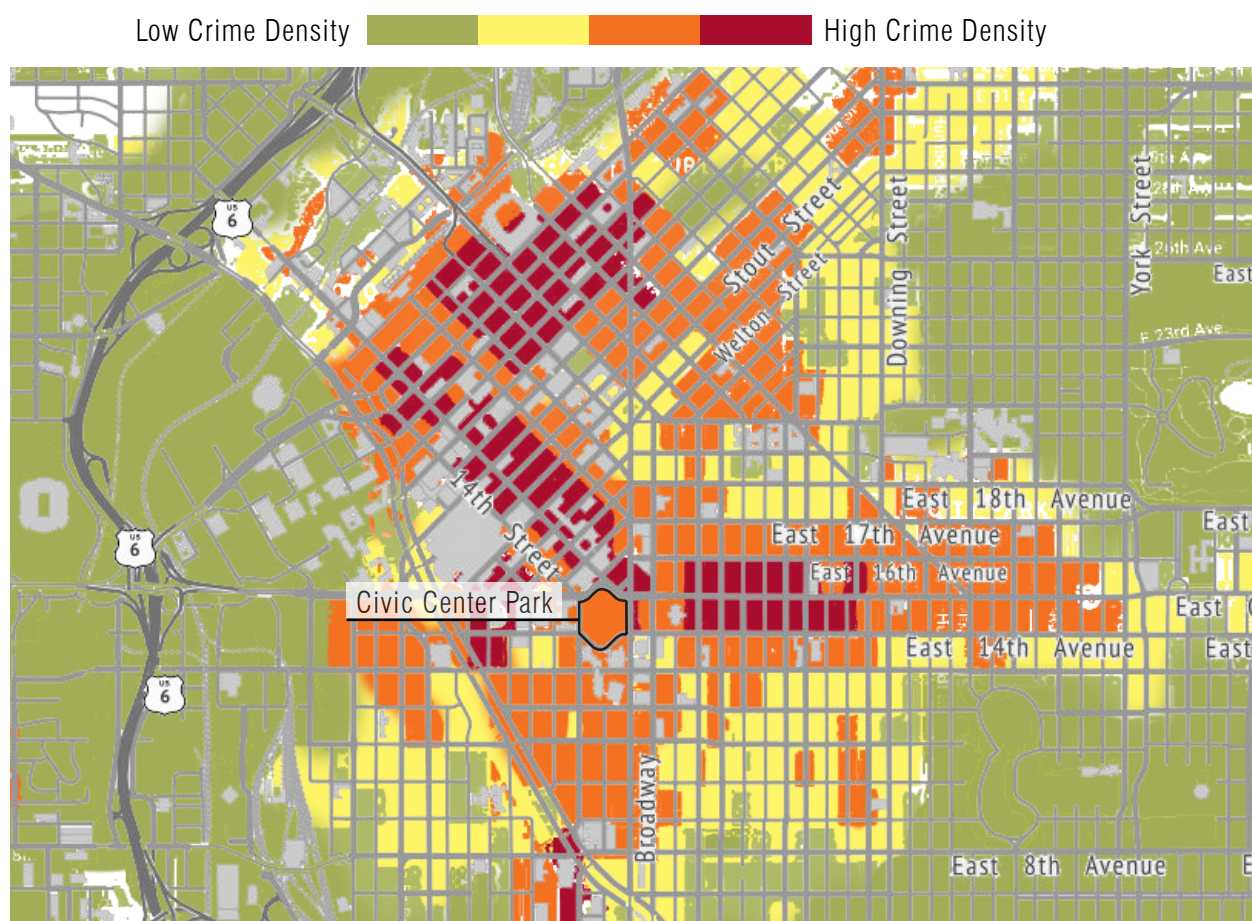


Figure 4.9. Downtown Denver's Crime Rate. (Adapted from: Trulia, 2017).

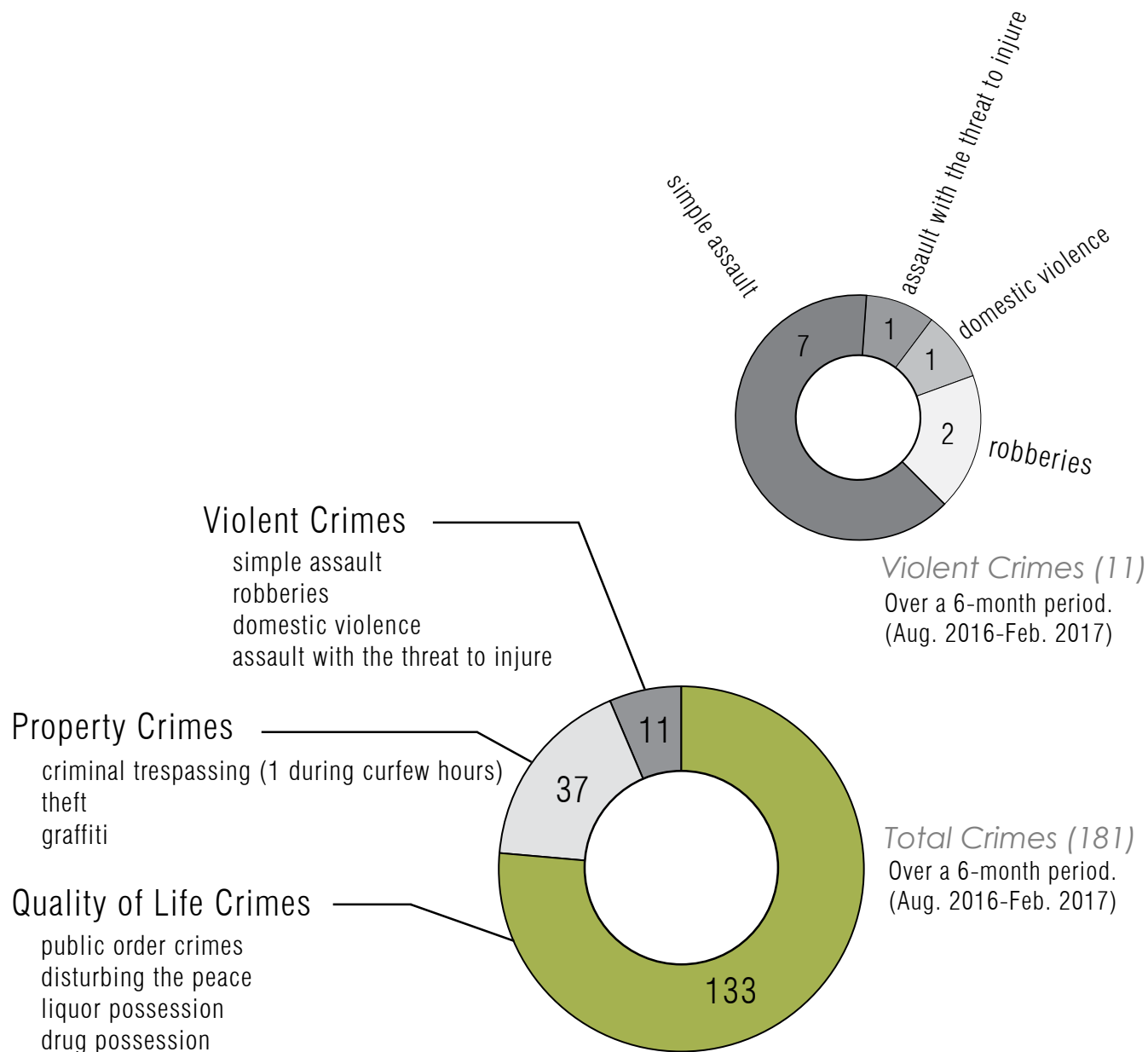
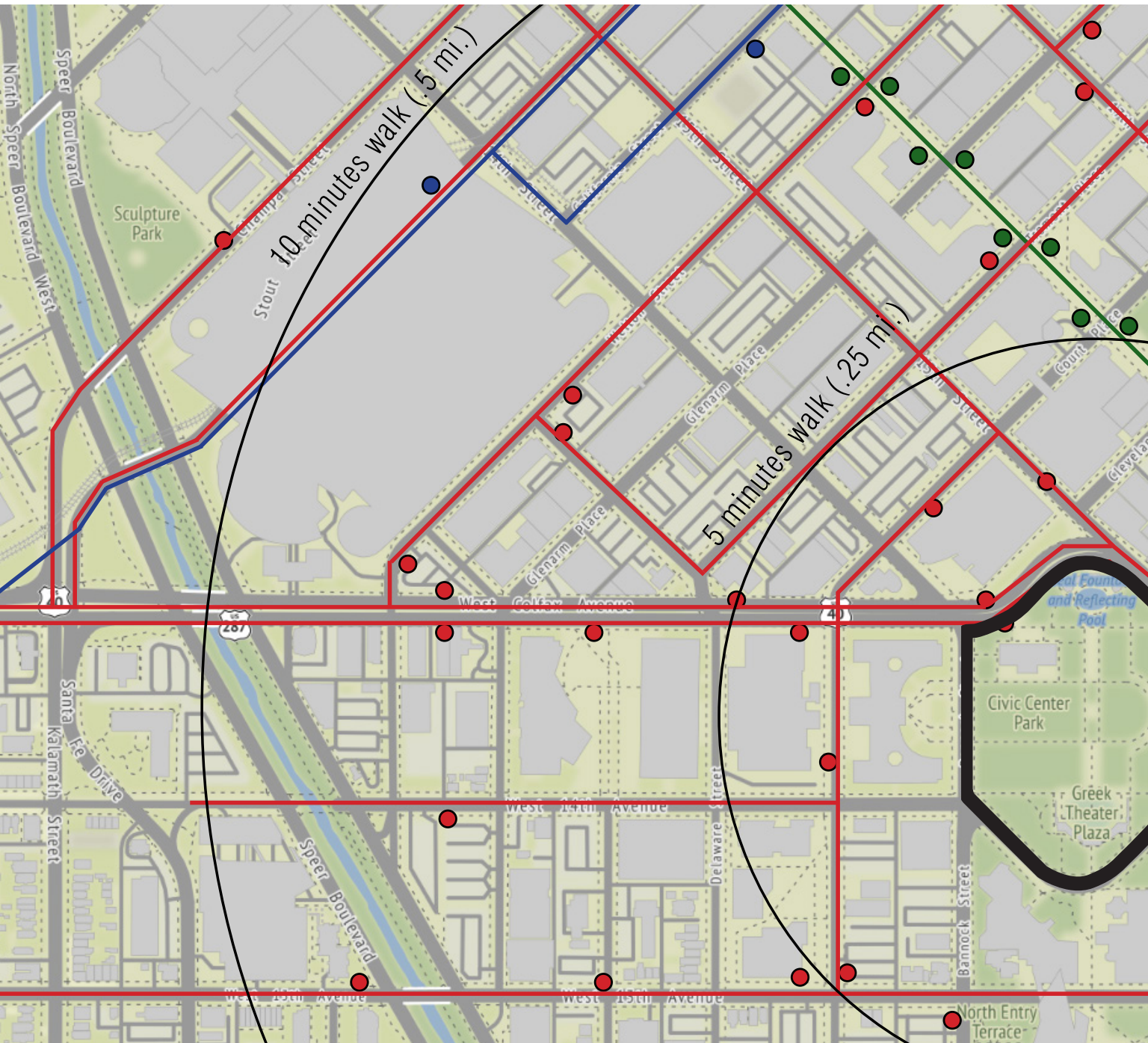


Figure 4.10. Break downs of the criminal activities that take place in the park reveal that a large majority of crimes are quality of life crimes and does not affect the safety of the park. Adapted from: (Crime Reports, 2017).



## Public Transportation

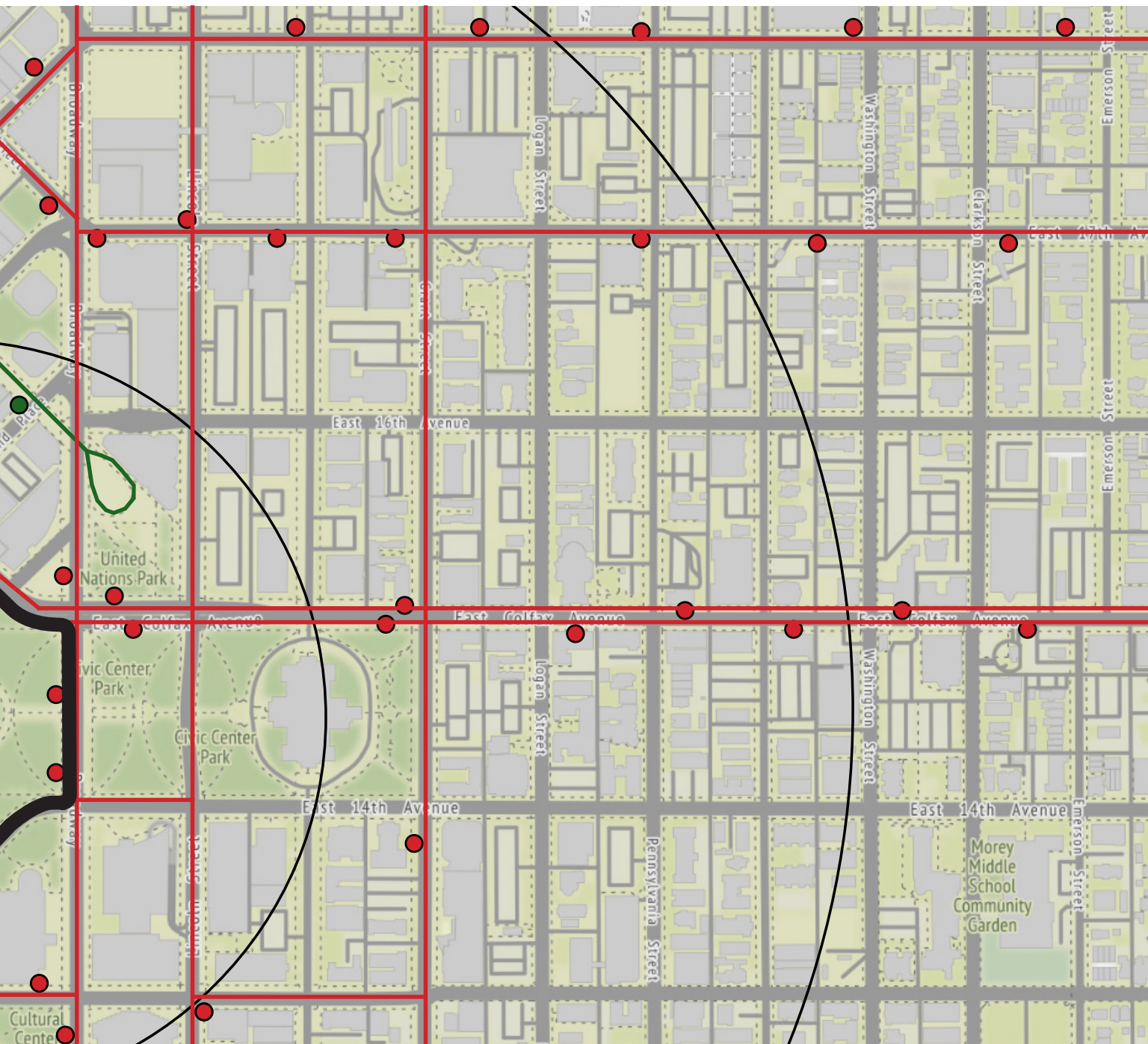
The park is located in the downtown area therefore there are many opportunities for public transportation. On the east side of the site, along N. Broadway St. are 2 bus stops. There is also another stop adjacent to the park on the north end along Colfax Ave. In close proximity there is also a lightrail stop for Denver's convention center that is only 3 blocks away. A free mall bus line that goes up and down 16th street mall terminates a block from the site. There is also 6 pedestrian crosswalks, as well as a bike lane on the west side of the park along Bannock St.





- Rail Line Stop
- Bus Stop
- Free Mall Bus Stop
- Bus Stop
- Rail Line Route
- Free Mall Bus Route

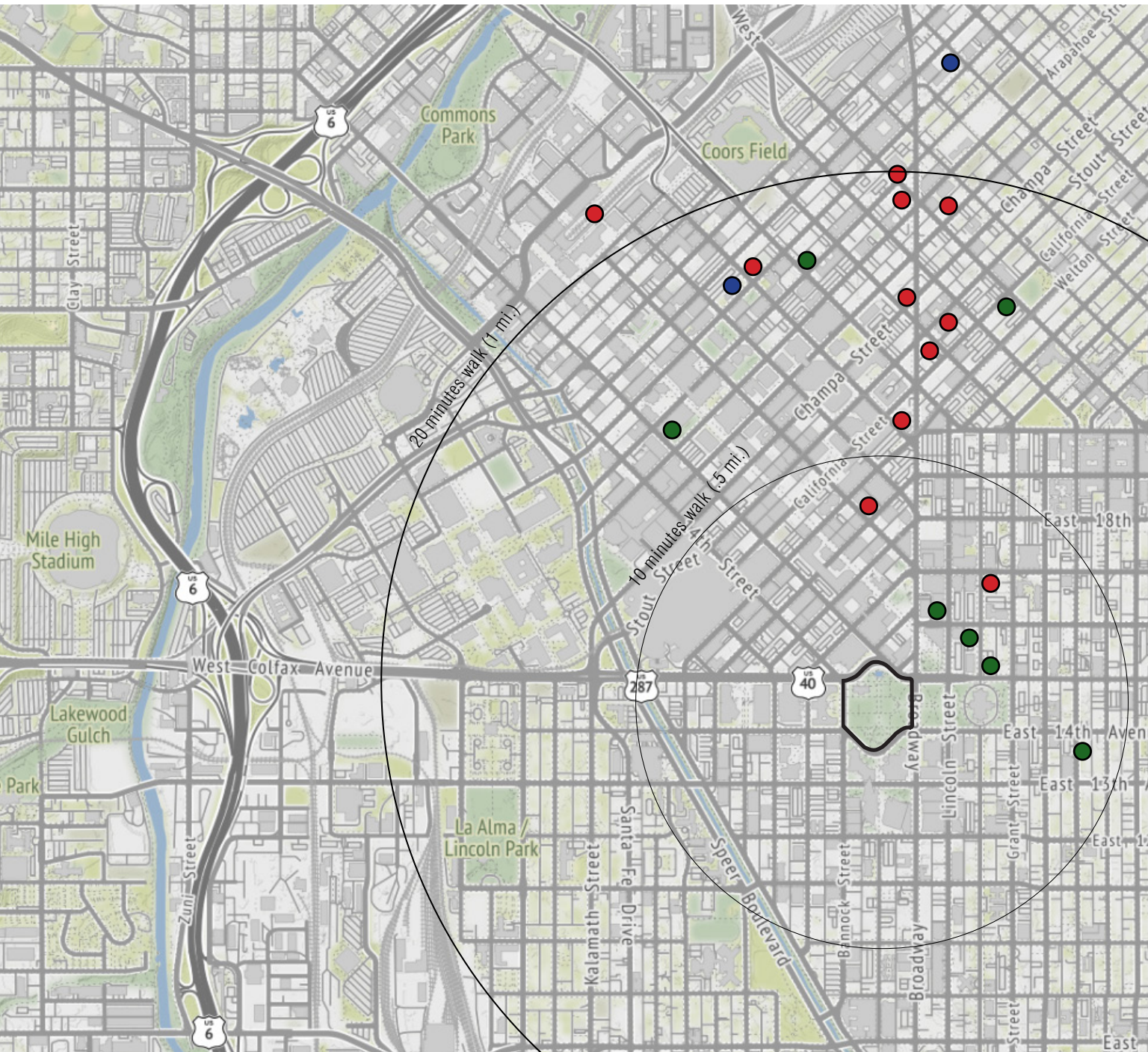
Figure 4.11. Public transportation in close proximity with Denver's Civic Center Park. (Adapted from: Stamen, 2017).





# Homeless Services

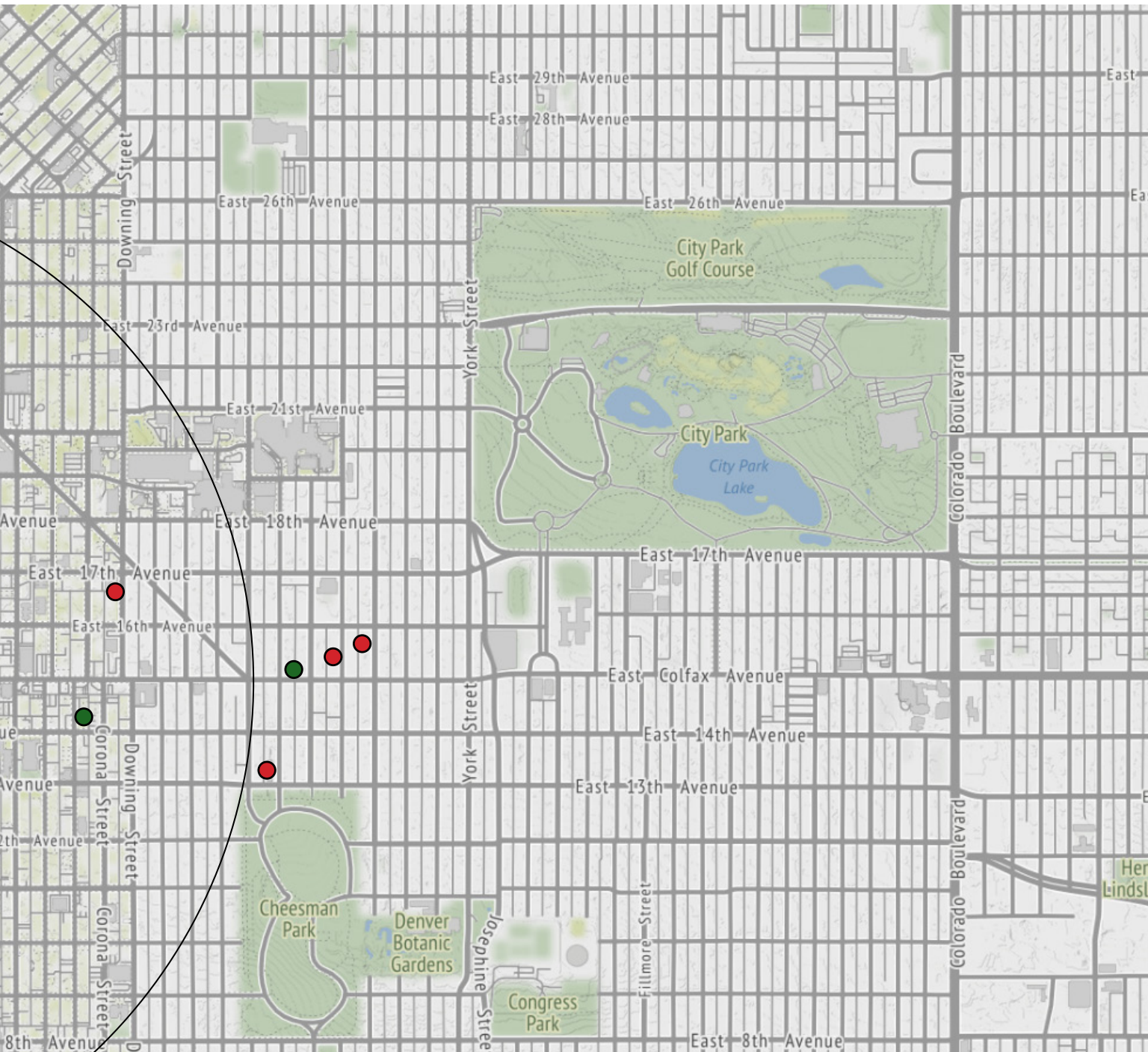
There are 19 emergency services within the a miles radius of the park that are visible from Google Maps. The number of homeless emergency services is higher, but for safety reasons not all service locations are mapped. In Figure 4.12, there are 11 are homeless shelter, 8 are other services that provide either food, medical help, or counselling for those experiencing homelessness or other hardship.





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Figure 4.12. Homeless Services in close proximity with Denver's Civic Center Park. (Adapted from: Stamen, 2017).





# chapter 5





Policy





# Overview

Denver's urban camping ban was passed in May 2012 in reaction to people living and camping on the streets and in public spaces. There are two main drivers that pushed the passing of the bill. The first was the increase in people sleeping, loitering, and panhandling on the very busy 16th street mall, an outdoor shopping center in the heart of downtown, leading to complaints from the local business owners. The other driver was a reaction to Occupy Denver, a local version of the national Occupy Wall Street protest movement. Where protesters would camp in urban public spaces to protest social and economic inequality. It eventually came to Denver's Civic Center Park, where tents popped up and protestors started to live. After 8-9 months of the occupying encampments at Civic Center Park, the urban camping ban then gained momentum to remove the tents and return the park back to the general public.

## *Existing Policy*

Denver's unauthorized camping ordinance, Sec. 38-86.2, prohibits unauthorized camping on public or private property. It states that, "it shall be unlawful for any person to camp upon public property except in locations where camping has been expressly allowed by the officer or agency having the control, management and supervision of the public property in question." The bill defines camping as: "to reside or dwell temporarily in a place, with shelter". The term "shelter" includes, "without limitation, any tent, tarpaulin, lean-to, sleeping bag, bedroll, blankets, or any form of cover or protection from the elements other than clothing". The term "reside or dwell" includes, "without limitation, conducting such activities as eating, sleeping, or the storage of personal possessions".

The intent of this law from the city's perspective was to encourage people who are sleeping on the streets to move to shelters or other service providers. However, this has not been the result. Those who are forced to move out often have nowhere else to go besides another street or another park.

There are many reasons why people do not want to or are unable to move to emergency shelters, with safety/ security being the

major reason. Often shelters are violent and possessions are stolen. In addition to the poor living conditions, there are also many hoops to jump through to get into the right shelter. Many emergency shelters have pre-requirements for whom they will accept, such as strict regulations on when you can access the facilities, creating conflicts with jobs and other responsibilities.

Critics of the ban say that it criminalizes homelessness and removes the marginalized population from the city's view, which they believe is the intent of the bill. From a homeless provider's perspective, the homeless population has become more dispersed making it more difficult for them to be in contact with the people they are trying to serve.

## *Key Findings and Study Implications*

The implementation of this bill has been very controversial since its beginnings in 2012. Denver's situation is not unique. Many other large cities are working to address conflicts between the general public and people experiencing homelessness.

In February 2016 Portland opened their streets and public spaces for urban camping. This caused so much negative feedback from the public and local businesses that they sued the city claiming that the open camping law was reducing the quality of life in their neighborhoods and communities. By August 2016, Portland's mayor Charlie Hales repealed this act of "safe sleeping" because of the negative response which stemmed from no clear understanding of the difference between a safe night sleeping and unsanctioned camping (OPB, 2016).

In October 2016, Seattle's Mayor Ed Murray proposed to open three new city-sanctioned encampments throughout Seattle. The original frustration that came from local residents have since died down and although not everyone is thrilled about the new encampments the city

plans to continue moving forward in providing safe places for urban camping (Singh-Kurtz, 2017).



## *Alternative Proposal to the Ban*

Specific public spaces could be designated by the city to host overnight sleeping. My goal is to create an environment, within Denver's Civic Center Park that is well lit, managed by a park host, and monitored by people of the community. The space would provide a safe sleeping arrangement for those who are currently sleeping in alleyways or by the river. Temporary structures such as tents will not be allowed and implementing a strict time frame, such as allowing people to sleep from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. will be valuable to the success of this policy change.

The difference between the new proposal for Denver's urban camping policy and Portland's failed trial is the scale. Denver will not open its streets and all public parks' to safe sleeping, but instead will use Denver's Civic Center Park as a pilot study to allow for a safe outdoor sleeping alternative to the alleys and hidden encampments. Both police officers as well as a group of park hosts will monitor the park. Park hosts are people from the community who are hired to regulate the space. This has been successful in a couple other public parks in Denver, which allowed for public bathrooms to be reopened and for communities

to distinguish between people experiencing homelessness and those who are using the space for illegal activities such as drug deals and prostitution. Allowing people to sleep/congregate in the park at night, will make people experiencing homelessness more visible and accessible to service providers.





# chapter 6



Design





# Overview

Denver's Civic Center Park is a historic park, open to all people, however there are a few design modifications that would improve the overall inclusivity of the park without diminishing its historic value or iconic beauty. These modifications will address the perceived and real safety of the park, implement better service access, and provide basic human amenities such as clean running water, restrooms, and a safe place to rest at night.

The ultimate goal in creating safe and active environments is to support different types of interaction that can trigger empathy and allow for relationships to build between different socioeconomic groups. In a more inclusive environment, misconceptions can be broken down and people can start seeing those who are experiencing homelessness as people.

## *Design Intent*

The goal of this design is to create a safe and active environment that could foster interactions between people experiencing homelessness and those who are not. Because these new spaces will be active and safe environments it will allow any interactions to trigger empathy for people experiencing homelessness, instead of fear. In creating an economically and socially diverse public space, relationships can grow between people who are experiencing homelessness and those who are not.

## *Process*

The design process consisted of studying the existing park and surrounding context to determine where modifications could/need to occur. The determined locations for redesigns are the Greek Amphitheater and the lawns on the southeast and southwest sections of the park (Figure 6.1). Goals for each specific site were established. Then, programmatic precedents were studied to evaluate the success of the amenities in other cities.

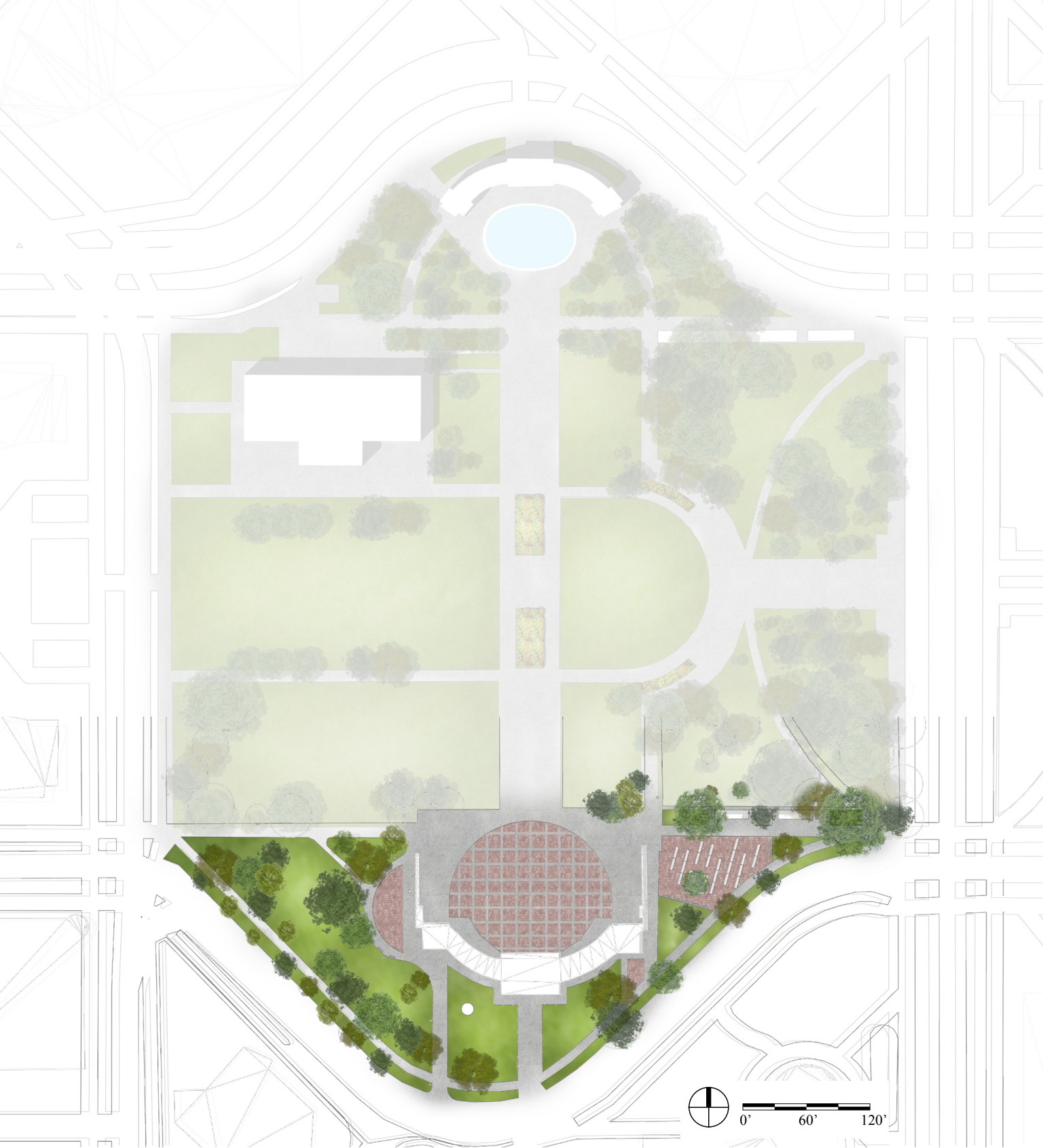


Figure 6.1. The design proposals are located in the southern part of Denver's Civic Center Park. (Bernal, 2017)



## Concept

The intent is not to design a homeless park, but to provide more amenities for *all* people, and in doing so address basic human needs through public spaces.

Three key modifications will increase the inclusivity of Denver's Civic Center Park. The first is to provide a range of amenities for all people including those who are experiencing homelessness. These amenities will activate the park and allow people to spend longer periods of time within the park boundaries. Because visibility is key to addressing perceived safety in a public space, the second major modification will be to reduce hidden spaces within the park and preserving existing viewsheds.

The final modification is to introduce a park host or hosts. Park hosts have proven to be successful in many other parks, including other Denver parks. They reduce the amount of illegal activities, but do not restrict acceptable activities. These three modifications will work with Civic Center Conservancy's recent programmatic changes and the historic beauty of Denver's Civic Center to create a more active and socially diverse park.



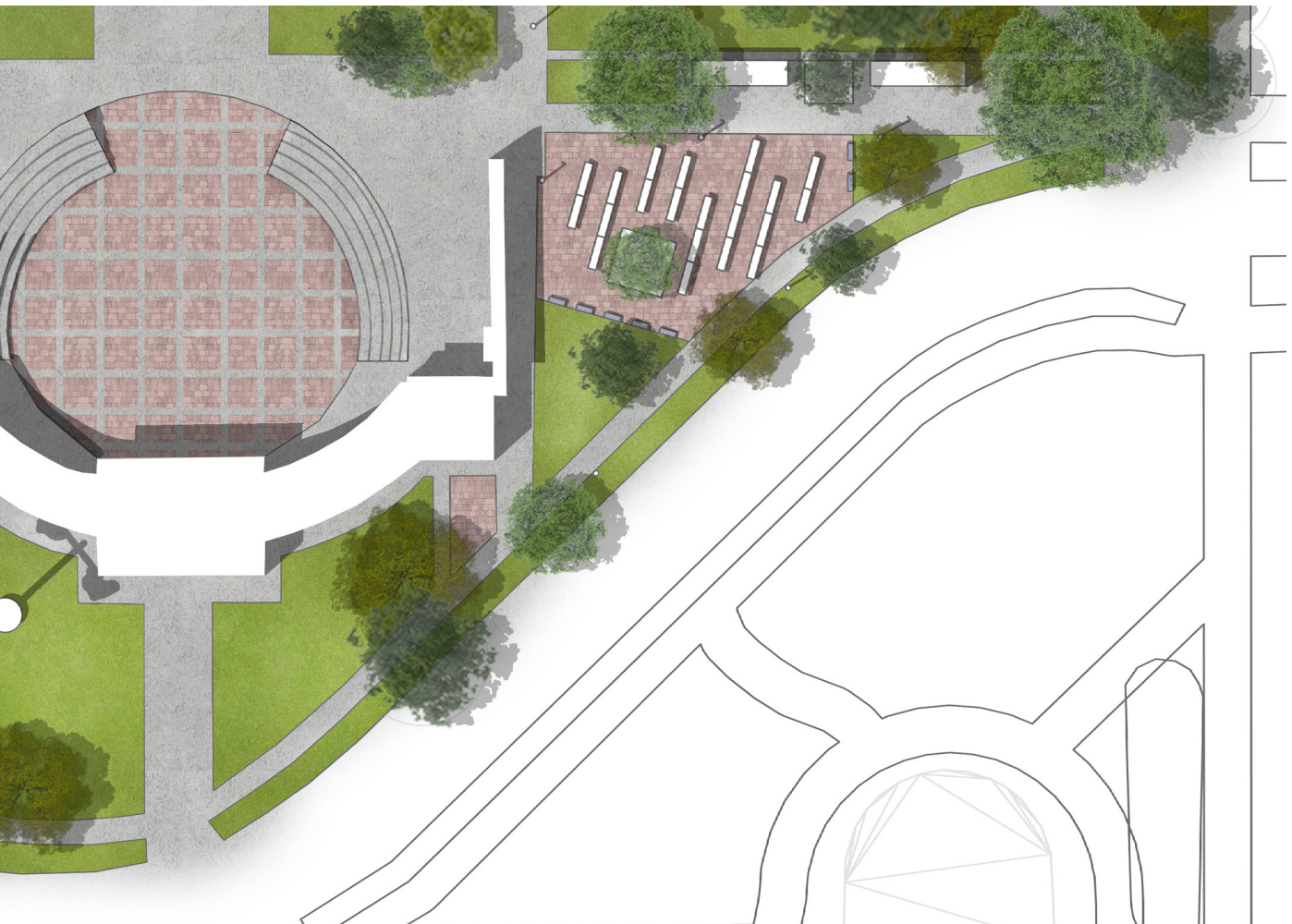
Figure 6.2. Activating the park with additional amenities is essential to making Denver's Civic Center Park more inclusive. (Bernal, 2017)



*Greek Amphitheater*  
Overnight Amenities



*East Plaza*  
Permanent Amenities



## *Permanent Amenities*



Permanent public restrooms will be very transparent while also providing an adequate amount of privacy. The structure will be heated in the winter and well ventilated. The restrooms will also have accessible stalls and should be easy to clean.



Drinking fountains, water bottle filler stations, and pet drinking fountains will be attached to the outside of the restrooms and will run all year round.



Storage lockers in two different sizes will be accessible on site 24/7. The larger lockers of 60 gallons could be rented out for a months time for a minimal charge of \$1. The smaller lockers, 15 gallons, could be rented out for free with a drivers license or other identification card for a 24 hour period. Management of locker rentals would be the responsibility of a park host.

## *Temporary Amenities*



Movable tables and chairs will provide an additional seating that is not currently provided within the park. The flexibility of the furniture is key to transforming the space for different uses throughout the day, week, and year.



Donation services could be set up in the park without disrupting the overall circulation. Sacked lunches, clothing, hygiene packs, etc. are examples of the types of services that already exist within the park. A service access point would make it easier for those groups to continue to reach out to people experiencing homelessness.



Retractable hammock poles will be installed in the hardscape of the amphitheater and would provide an alternative sleeping arrangement, in addition to sleeping on the ground. Hammocks could also be provided during the day as a place to rest. Durable hammocks could be provided and removed by a park host during events.



A park kiosk will be the landing space for the park hosts (people hired by the city to work within the park). The park host will serve to provide information, rentals, and an extra sense of security to the park. The structure, like the restrooms, should be very transparent and welcoming to the public.



Recreation activities such as balls, kites, frisbees, and nets could be rented out free of charge with a drivers license or other identification card. Having these activities accessible will help promote Colorado's active lifestyle to visitors and local alike.



Board games and playing cards could also be rented out of the park kiosk with a drivers license or other identification card, to promote less active, but social interactions.



Temporary healthcare providers could use the plaza to provided medical, dental, and veterinary services to promote better hygiene and services among people experiencing homelessness and their pets. This is not necessarily a service provided by the city, but a place were other service providers work directly with their clients.



Temporary laundry services could be brought into the park to provide an amenity that helps provide people experiencing homelessness access to clean clothes. This is not necessarily a service provided by the city, but a place were other service providers could serve their clients.



Temporary shower trucks could be stationed in the park at various times throughout the week to allow people who are experiencing homelessness to shower. This service is intended to be temporary initially to service as a trial run to see if a more permanent shower structure could work within the park in the future.



## *East Plaza*

New amenities will increase inclusivity for all users, as well as allow people to stay in the park for longer periods of time. There is a great need for public restrooms throughout the city for all people, not just those experiencing homelessness. There is not a single public restroom in the downtown area that is open 24/7, has drinking water available, and is of a standard higher than a porta-potty (DHOL, 2014). Permanent public restrooms, in addition to a park host to monitor them, would be an asset to the park.

Drinking fountains are also a necessity for all users of the park. The park currently only has one drinking fountain at the north end of the site and it is turned off in the winter months. Attaching drinking fountains for both people and dogs to a heated permanent restroom or kiosk will allow them to run year-round.

A kiosk will provide a landing space for the park hosts. It will also serve as an information center, a place where lockers, games, ball, kites, etc. could be rented out at little or no cost.

Lockers, to secure their possessions, have proven to be successful for people experiencing homelessness. For example, in 2015, San Diego built 304, 89-gallon\* storage lockers for the homeless. Charging only \$1 per month the idea has proven to be a great success and has 150 people

on the wait-list (SD Housing Commission, 2015). In Portland, an old shipping crate was turned into a set of lockers and though hesitant about the success at first, the lockers have helped clean up the neighborhoods, with less trash. Salt Lake City also started a Hope Lockers Foundation, which provides the city with day use lockers for free (LAKANNA, 2017). The lockers in Denver's Civic Center Park would vary in size. A smaller 15 gallon\* locker would be rented out for a 24-hour time period at no charge. A larger 60 gallon\* locker could be rented out for a months' time for \$1. Each row of lockers will also have a sculptural component to them, to help people remember which locker is theirs. Each row of lockers would have a mountain silhouette along with the name and from a further distance the rows of lockers would create a range of mountains.

The lockers in Denver's Civic Center Park could be used as a pilot and if demand exceeds the number of lockers, which in other cities it has, then lockers could be implemented throughout the city.

Other amenities such as charging stations, heaters, movable tables and chairs will be implemented throughout the redesigned sections of the park as a trial then potentially implemented throughout the park.

\* 89 gallons = 1ft. x 3ft. x 4ft.

\* 15 gallons = 12in. x 18in. x 16in.

\* 60 gallons = 48in. x 18in. x 16in.

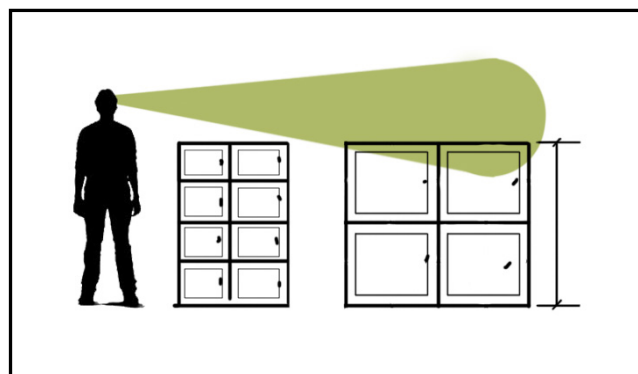
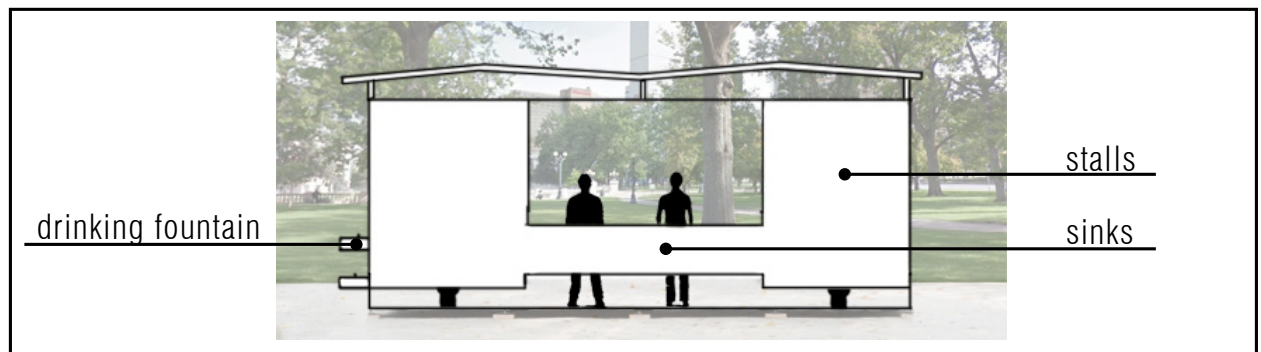
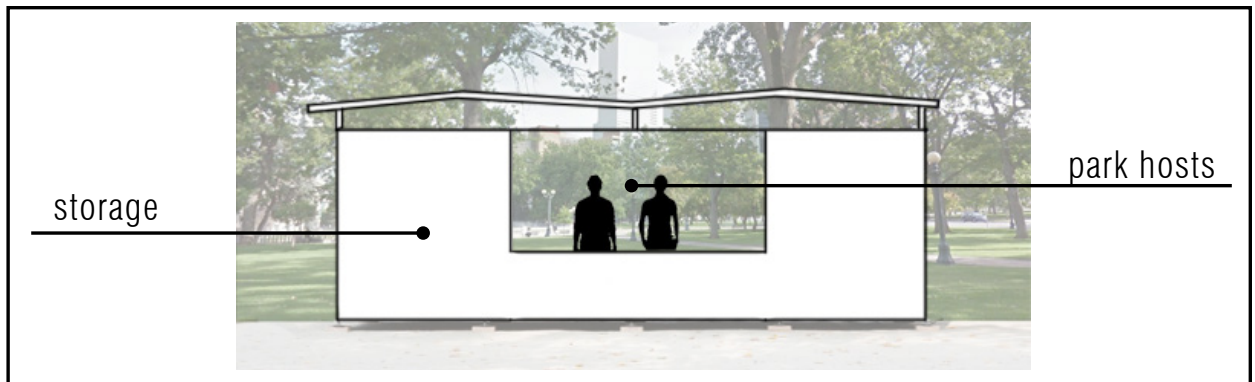


Figure 6.3. Visibility is a key component in addressing perceived safety throughout the park and is part of the overall concept of design. (Bernal, 2017)

## *Public Restrooms*

Public restrooms are essential to keeping our cities clean and providing a basic human amenity for all. Denver has realized this through their Public Restroom pilot program, in which the city has provided two mobile restrooms that circulate through different neighborhoods. The purpose of these restrooms is to address Denver's lack of public restrooms as well as to suggest where permanent restrooms could be placed (Pysyk, 2017). Denver is not the only city experiencing a lack of public restrooms. Many American cities' do not have the infrastructure to support public restrooms and very little has been done to change it. The topic has however come up in recent conversation and many believe is on the verge of changing (Nosowitz, 2016).

In 2008, Portland implemented their Portland Loo project to provide restrooms in the city. The design is considered to be a "defense-first" design. The restroom has no running water and no mirror to prevent people from lingering. It has openings on both the top and bottom for ventilation and visibility of people's feet (Metcalf, 2012). Although this design is successful in preventing criminal activities, it does have a cold feel to it, which was

the design intentions. For Denver's Civic Center Park a much lighter and approachable structure can be implemented, especially with the addition of a park host to regulate and clear the restrooms. However, keeping the ventilation and visibility will be important to the Civic Center Design.

A well designed public restrooms must be clean and dry, well ventilated, easy to maintain, carefully planned, and friendly to persons with special needs or disabilities (Restroom Association, 2013).

Proper ventilation is the most important aspect to public toilets. Natural lighting can be used to help create a soft friendly environment. Materials should be durable and help facilitate cleaning. Partitions that hang also make it easier to clean (Restroom Association, 2013). Visibility while also accommodating some privacy can be a challenge in public restrooms, but is essential for keeping the restrooms a safe environment.



Figure 6.4. Portland addresses the urban public restroom crisis with the Portland Loo, a very durable alternative. (Beebe, 2010)



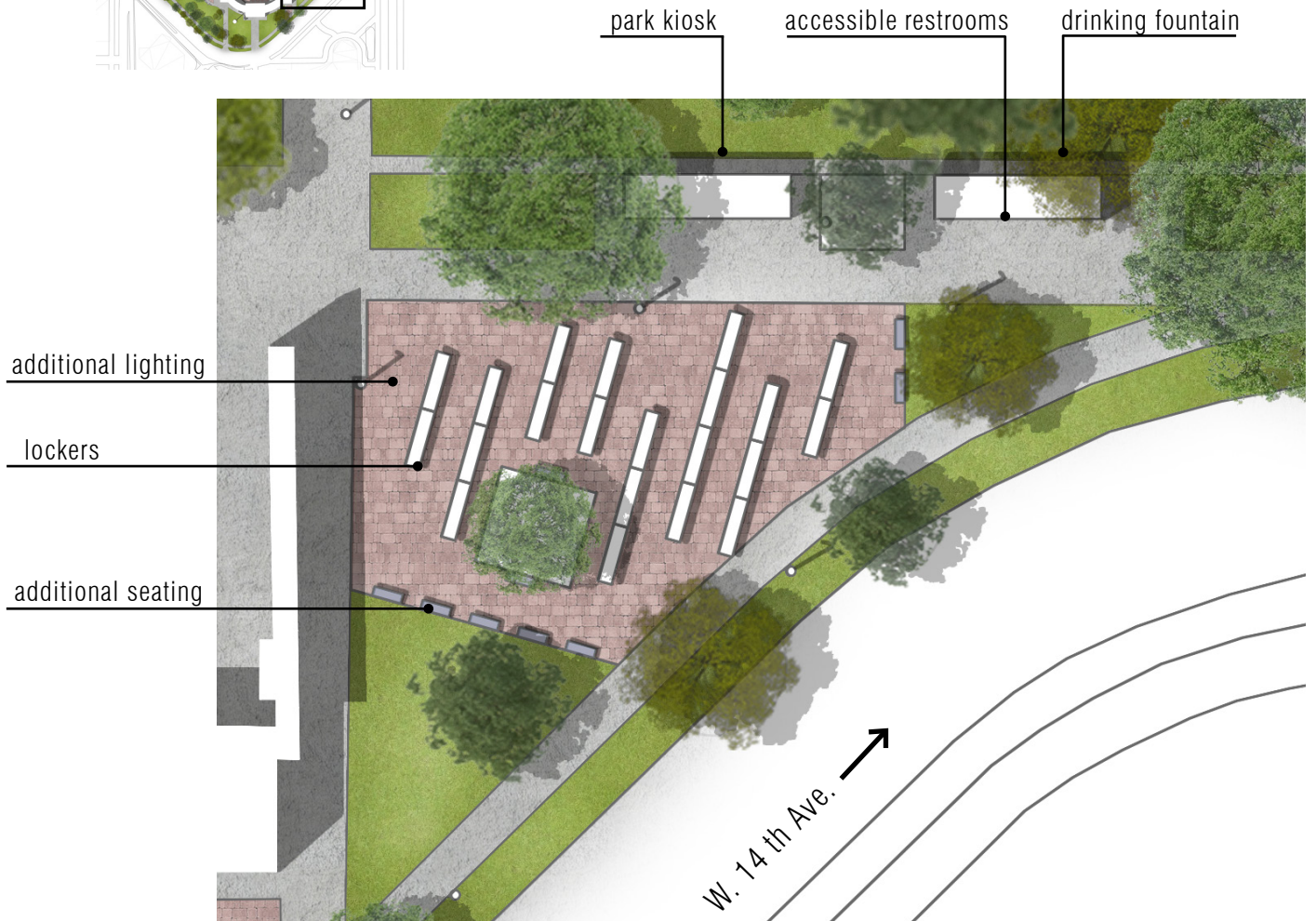
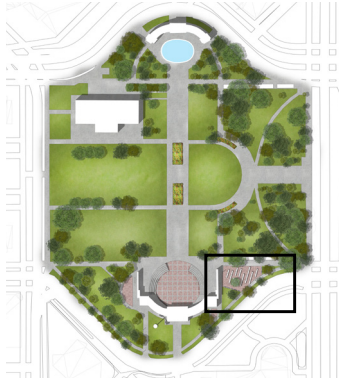


Figure 6.5. The east plaza has permanent amenities to encourage more people to use the park and stay there for longer periods of time. (Bernal, 2017)

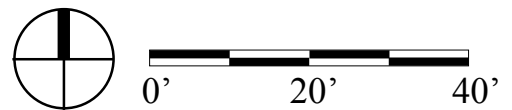




Figure 6.6. The restroom layout is simple and transparent for safe use and easy cleaning. (Bernal, 2017)





*Before*



Figure 6.7. Iconic mountain sculptures can bring a sense of identity to the space as well as help users remember their lockers. (Bernal, 2017)







## *West Plaza*

The park has many existing paths and walkways, which is positive for the perception of safety. However, there are few service access points. One of the main locations where services are provided is along the central corridor at the south entry to the park. These events can cause congestion of people, which is intimidating to other groups and often forces passersby to loop around to avoid the crowd. Moving these service access points to the west, less trafficked sidewalk would provide opportunity to be visible from the road and stay close to the amphitheater, but avoid blocking the main circulation path.

A hardscape plaza will allow for large vehicles to drive into the park and unload, reload, or even serve people directly from their vehicles with ease. When temporary mobile services are not provided a sculptural art piece will be the focal point of the space, which will relate to Civic Center's already artistic nature.

Temporary services such as showers could be used as a pilot study to gain community support or to find a different location better suited for the amenity.



Figure 6.8. Many existing and future amenities could help ease the hardship of living on the streets as well as provide opportunities for positive social interactions. (Bernal, 2016)

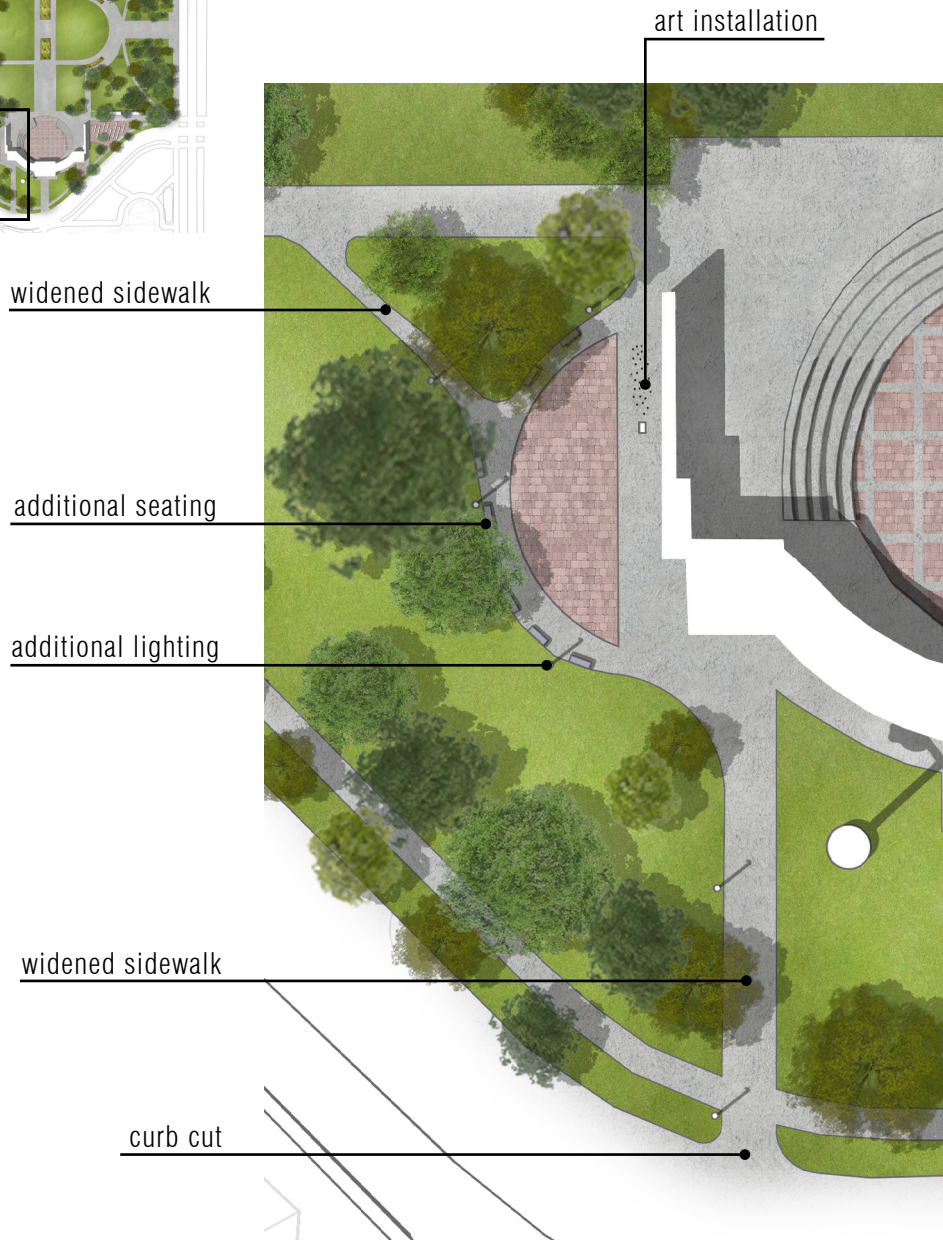


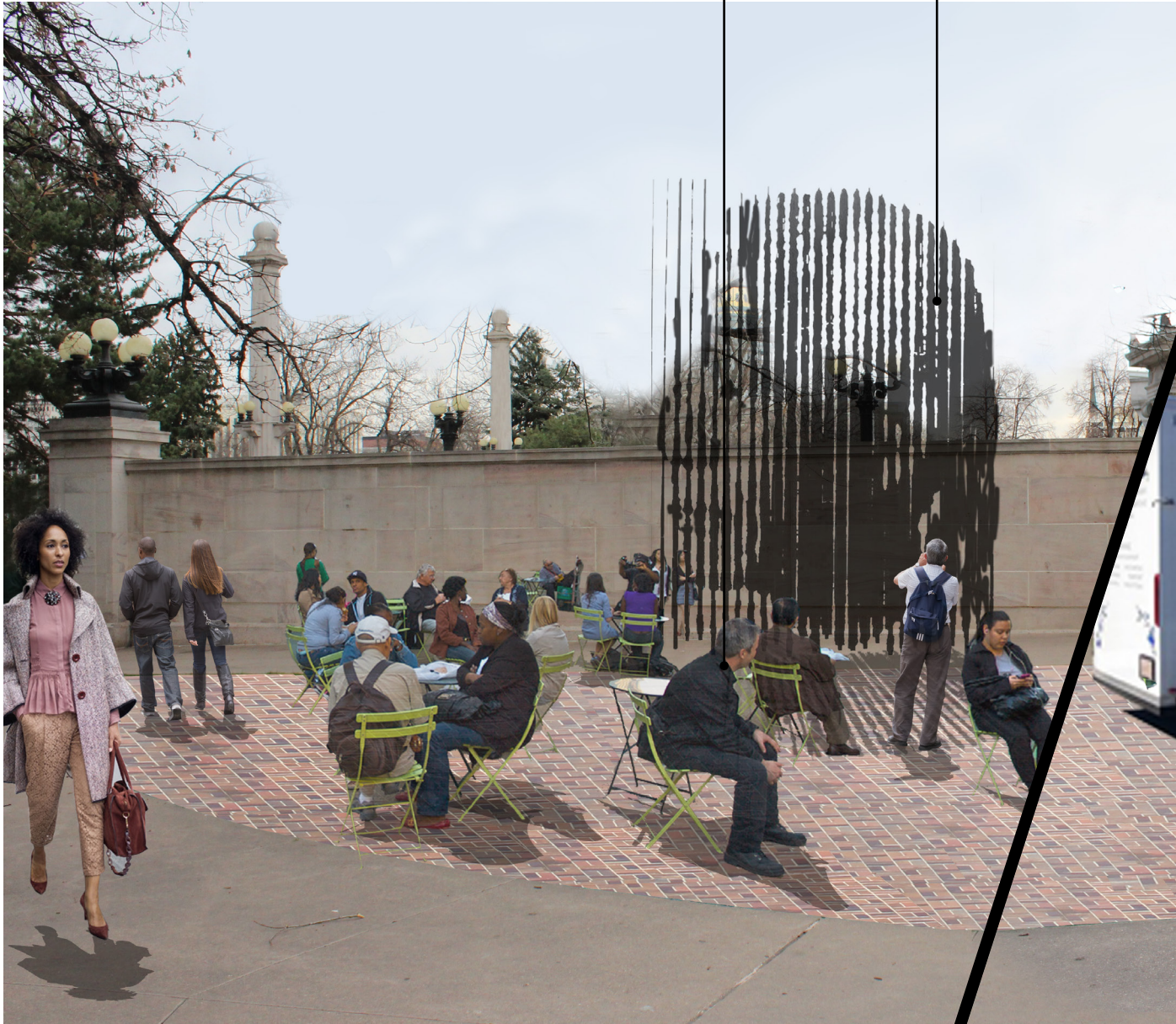
Figure 6.9. Service access can work with a hardscape plaza to provide functional space throughout the day. (Bernal, 2017)



0' 30' 60'



Before



movable furniture

art installation

Figure 6.10. Providing spaces that can transform with the users will help activate all areas of the park. (Bernal, 2017)



service access paving

temporary showers/laundry





## *Greek Amphitheater*

A policy change to allow people to safely sleep in Denver's Civic Center Park would have the greatest impact on the Greek Amphitheater. Because of its large hardscaped area and slight elevation change, the amphitheater could support many sleepers. Amenities such as hammocks that attach to poles built into the ground could provide a small amount of privacy and comfort while sleeping outside overnight or taking a lunch time nap. In the case of an event or simply not wanting hammocks everywhere the park host could detach and store them and lower the poles back into the ground.

Sufficient lighting will be needed to permit clear visibility, but not so bright that it keeps people from falling asleep. Other areas could have brighter lights where people could read, study, or play board games.

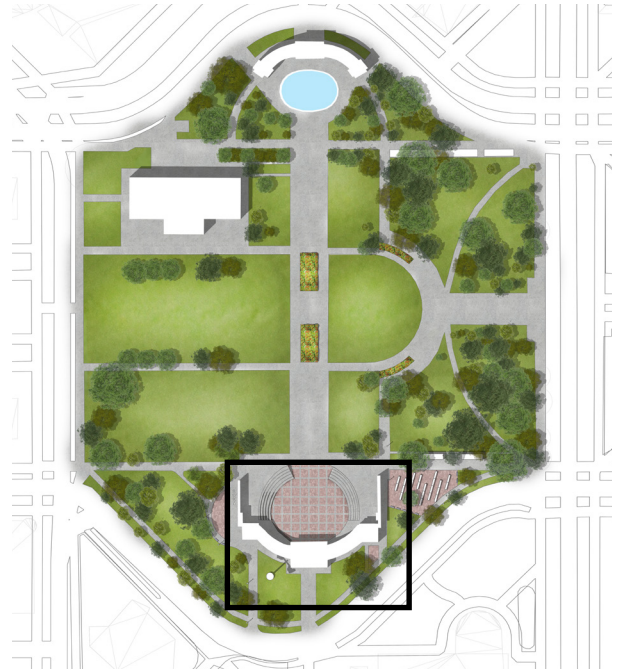


Figure 6.11. The Greek Amphitheater is a key component to the existing park and the history of Denver's civic space. (Bernal, 2017)



Figure 6.12. The Greek Amphitheater is an iconic sculptural structure that showcases Denver's history and has gone through great efforts to be renovated and preserved. (Bernal, 2016)





Figure 6.13. Preserving the Greek Amphitheater for historic value as well as existing events is essential to the design. (Bernal, 2016)



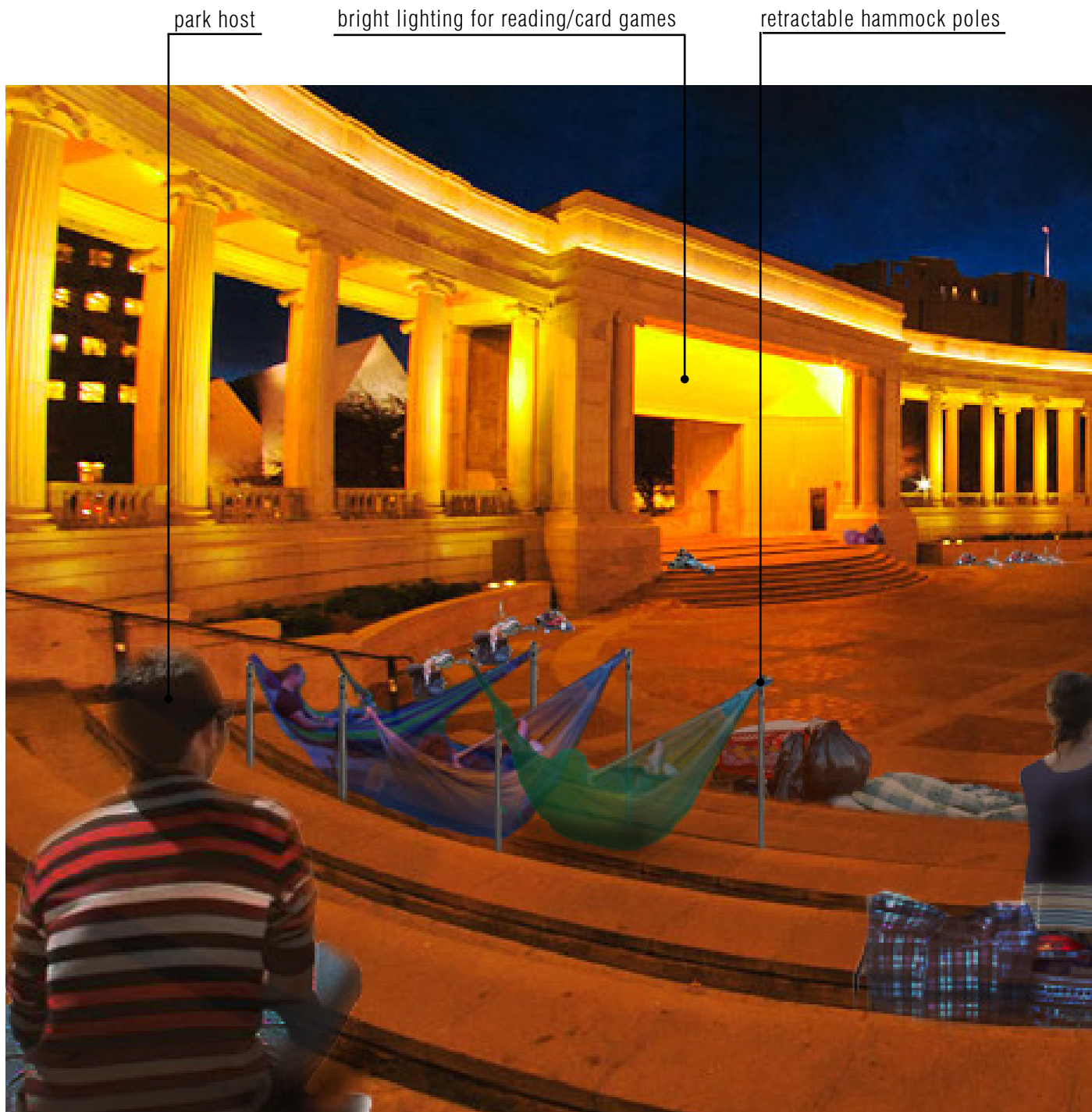


Figure 6.14. The Greek Amphitheater could provide a safer alternative for people who are sleeping in allies. (Bernal, 2017)



Before

security guard



## *Hidden Spaces*

Higher visibility throughout the park is key to increasing its perceived and real safety. Removing all hidden spaces within the amphitheater will help increase the visibility within the park. Although the structure of an amphitheater proposes some obstructions for visibility, there are some alcoves that are particularly hidden. These alcoves were once entryways to interior offices within the amphitheater structure, but problems with human defecation have rendered these offices unusable and therefore permanently closed. However, these hidden alcoves remain a dangerous and unsanitary section of the park. Removing some existing balustrades and partially opening the alcoves via a ramp will increase visibility and provide ADA access through the space. These small alterations will preserve the integrity and historic nature of the structure while still addressing a serious problem within the park.



Figure 6.15. Two hidden alcoves within the Greek Amphitheater are existing spaces that are unsanitary and are often locations for illegal activities to occur, such as public urination. (Bernal, 2017)

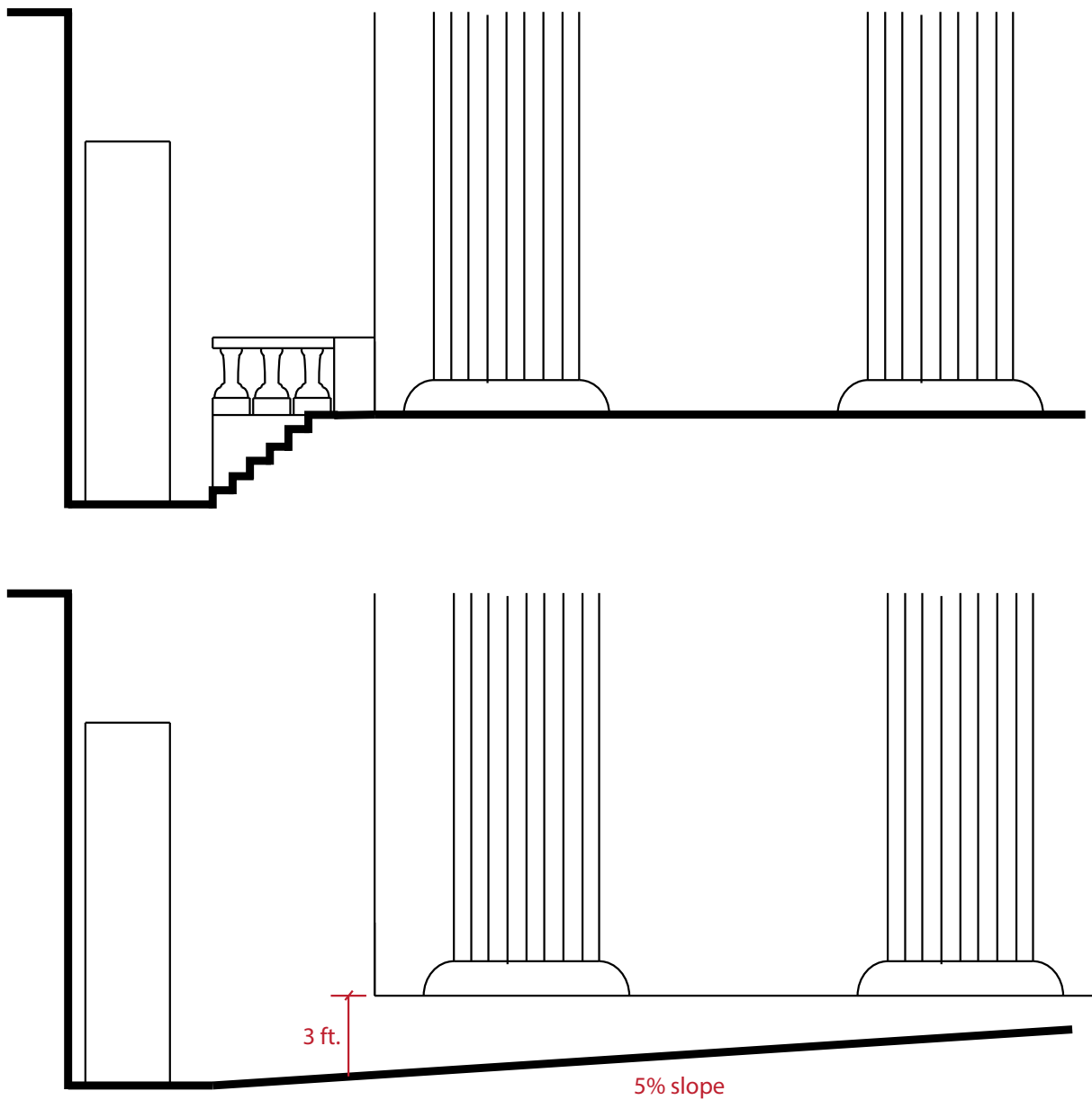


Figure 6.16. A ramp instead of stairs will open up the hidden area for better visibility and ADA access. (Bernal, 2017)



## *Chapter Summary*

The intent of these redesigns is to promote greater inclusivity within the park and in doing so provide basic human needs for a population that is consistently under served. The only way this park can be successful in creating safe inclusive environments is to keep the diversity of users in the park. Making a park that only caters to people experiencing homelessness will not be successful without heavy maintenance and constant patrolling. Other groups such as Civic Center Conservancy are attracting daytime users throughout the business work day, but they fail to provide amenities consistently throughout the week and during off-seasons. Permanent amenities would help bring people to the park and allow them to spend longer periods of time there. Infrastructure that supports temporary services could make providing those services easier throughout the year. And addressing the negative perception of safety by increasing visibility as well as removing hidden spaces will activate the park with more diverse people.



# chapter







Conclusion

## *Limitations*

Most of the limitations of my research dealt with time and therefore influences the suggestions for future research. Spending more time speaking with all users of the park could have been beneficial in getting a more in-depth opinion of the park. Also spending more time speaking with the people experiencing homelessness could have revealed more of their individual challenges and how the park's infrastructure could better support them.

Homelessness is an extremely complex problem that comes with many complications. Although I feel as if I have gained an extensive knowledge of Denver's homelessness, I am aware that there are still elements that I do not fully understand. For example, Figure 7.1 shows a delicious looking apple left perched on a planter's edge untouched. In a park where people are experiencing hunger, I did not understand why the apple stood alone. Not until later interviews did I realize that many people living on the streets lack dental care making it difficult to bite into hard foods like an apple. Avoiding "apple" solutions such as these will come with a deeper understanding of homelessness, speaking with people who work to find solutions, and listening to the people who are experiencing it.

## *Future Research*

Understanding the park more completely at night would be beneficial to the success of the design proposal, especially looking at the amphitheater area.

Development of a comprehensive plan for the different urban camping typologies could help provide a more holistic approach in not treating every public space with a universal solution.

Exploring opportunities for temporary services, such as showers to become more permanent in public spaces and in Denver's Civic Center Park could provide an amenity for many people. Permanent public showers could prove to be useful for people experiencing homelessness, visitors coming down from camping wanting to get a bit to eat, workers who work out during lunch or bike to work. Denver is an active city and we should encourage people to continue to be active through public amenities.





Figure 7.1. Solutions, such as giving a person who lacks dental hygiene an apple, will not solve hunger. Understanding the problem thoroughly is essential to thoughtful solutions. (Bernal, 2016)



## Conclusion

This project has the potential to change the way cities and landscape architects create public space to provide for basic human needs and encourage interactions between people who are experiencing homelessness and those who are not. Hiding the homeless or pushing them out of our cities is not going to fix the problem, and in fact will make it much worse and even more difficult to measure.

The challenges of Denver's Civic Center Park lie mostly within the perceived safety of the park. These negative perceptions are rooted in a larger misunderstanding and fear of people experiencing homelessness. However, by creating safe and active environments that are attractive and functional for a variety of people we can encourage interactions to trigger empathy instead of fear.

My goal in making a more inclusive park is to start to address the problem through breaking down misconceptions and to start seeing people who are experiencing homelessness as people.



Figure 7.2. Denver Civic Center Park has the space and the location to design for all people including those who are experiencing homelessness. Because of its size, various activities and users can use the space simultaneously leading to informal interactions between people experiencing homelessness and those who are not. (Bernal, 2016)



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## IRB Approval Letters


Two IRB forms were submitted to Kansas State University. The first was in order to conduct interviews with professionals that have either directly or indirectly worked with people experiencing homelessness in Denver, Colorado. The second IRB form was to speak directly with people in the park who were perceived to be experiencing homelessness. They were asked specific questions about their experiences in the park and how it could be made better. Both approval letters are below.



University Research Compliance Office

TO: Dr. Anne Beamish  
Landscape Architecture/Regional & Community Planning  
318 Seaton Hall

Proposal Number: 8679

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair   
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 03/06/2017

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Making Public Parks Public: Increasing Inclusivity in Denver's Civic Center Park"

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written - and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §46.101, paragraph b, category: 2, subsection: ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

# Appendix A



University Research Compliance Office

TO: Anne Beamish  
Landscape Architecture  
Seaton Hall

Proposal Number: 8570

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 12/13/16

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Making Public Parks Public: Increasing Inclusivity in Denver's Civic Center Park"

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written -- and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §46.101, paragraph b, category: #2, subsection: ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

## Consent Forms

Verbal consent was given by the people who were interviewed in the park. Purposefully, the people in the park were anonymous. Informed consent forms were collected from each professional interview. All professional interviewees gave permission to be interviewed as well as have their names and organizations recorded. Below is the Verbal Consent Script and Informed Consent form. All raw notes and recordings were only in possession of the interviewer, Kaitlin Bernal.

### Verbal Consent Script

“Hi my name is Kaitlin Bernal. I am a graduate student at Kansas State University in the College of Architecture, Planning and Design. I am undertaking research that will be used for my master’s project.

My research focuses on the inclusivity of Denver’s Civic Center Park for all people, and whether or not the park is welcoming to all people. My goal is to discuss with you any changes or additions to the park that would make it more welcoming and better for people who are experiencing homelessness. The information you share with me will be confidential. There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality for I will not record any personal information, just your ideas for the park.

The information you share with me will take about 5 minutes and will help me to understand and address some of the concerns and needs of the real users of the park.

Participation is voluntary. You can, of course, decline to talk with me, as well as stop participating at any time.

Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate? “

### Interview Questions

The questions I will ask are intended to open up discussion on the topic: what changes need to be made to make Denver’s Civic Center Park more welcoming to people experiencing homelessness. The direct questions are:

How do you use the park?

What areas do you tend to prefer and why?

What areas do you avoid and why?

How can this park be made better for people who are experiencing homelessness?



# Appendix B

## Informed Consent

Project Title: Making Public Parks Public:

Increasing Inclusivity in Denver's Civic Center Park

Understanding the programs and services provided for the homeless in Denver's Civic Center Park.

You have the opportunity to communicate your experience and expertise in working with the homeless population. To learn more about this project keep reading.

I am studying Denver's Civic Center Park, specifically looking at the homeless population that congregate in the area as part of my Master's project in the department of Landscape Architecture/ Regional & Community Planning at Kansas State University. I am doing research on what design and policy strategies could be implemented to make Denver's Civic Center Park more inclusive and secure for all park users, including the homeless population. I will ask questions relevant to your professional work that pertain to the homeless population in Denver or the area of your work experience.

For confidentiality purposes, your name or photo will not be recorded or appear in my final research documentation, unless given specific consent in the check box below. If you decide to give consent your name and the name of your organization will be recorded in my documentation.

For note taking purposes a recording device will record the interview and will only be listened to by myself, Kaitlin Bernal to ensure that my written notes are accurate. If you decide to not have the interview recorded please indicate so in the check box below and/or specify your preference in the beginning of the phone interview.

For any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Kaitlin Bernal at [kaitlinbernal@gmail.com](mailto:kaitlinbernal@gmail.com) and (303) 330- 5420 or Anne Beamish at [abeamish@ksu.edu](mailto:abeamish@ksu.edu) and (785) 532- 3852, K-State's Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu) and (785) 532- 3224, Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224, or Cheryl Doer, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall , Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532- 3224.

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I understand this project is for research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms indicated, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form. The original form will be scanned and given to you.

☐ I give consent for my name and the name of my organization to be recorded in the documentation of this report.

☐ I do not give consent for a recording device to record the content of this interview for note taking purposes.

By signing below, I \_\_\_\_\_ give consent to interviewing with Kaitlin Bernal. By giving permission I acknowledge that parts of the interview may be used in the final research of Kaitlin Bernal's Master's project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return form to Kaitlin Bernal before the start of the interview either in person or over email.

## Site Observation

On October 21-22, 2016 on-site observations were formally recorded, through a series of documentation. Example of those documents can be found below. The goal of this method was to achieve a better understanding of how the park is used and by whom.

### Time In Space Counting

Time in Space	Tallies	Notes (start/end time of person and short description ie: color of shirt)
Passer-Bys		Man <del>Adm</del> 0:00 - 22:40
1-4:59 min.		Man 0:00 - 8:30
5-9:59 min.		Man 6:00 - 11:11
10-14:59 min.		read 0:00 - 30
15-19:59 min.		grass 0:00 - 30
20-24:59 min.		Man 1:30 - 30
25-29:59 min.		Man J 1:00 - 6:20
30 + min.		Man Drink 5:00 - 12:20
		Man pick B 0:00 30
		bike - 8:50 - 11:50
		W - 9:50 - 50
		Yoga - 10:17 - 19:17
		Man bag 10:59 - 13:29
		frim 11:53 - 23:27
		Wttn 14:45 - 50
		green 15:11 - 30
		bike 20:00 - 30
		blp 10:30 - 30
		kb 23:12 - 50
		orange hat 18:32
		boy 24:19 - 30
		Wttn 20 - 23:36

Time in Space	Tallies	Notes (start/end time of person and short description ie: color of shirt)
Passer-Bys		Man sleep 11:10 - 11:20
1-4:59 min.		sleep 11:10 - 11:40
5-9:59 min.		Wondry 11:10 - 11:40
10-14:59 min.		walk 11:10 - 11:20
15-19:59 min.		rest 11:10 - 11:20
20-24:59 min.		task 11:12
25-29:59 min.		no 11:12 - 11:40
30 + min.		5 bike
		bike to tow - 05:2 - 9:56
		3 8:20
		2 10:50
		4 11:40
		2 10:14
		drink 17:30 - 18:40



# Appendix C

## Behavior Mapping

Person #	Sex	Age								Activities																
		Male	Female	0 - 6	7 - 18	18 - 34	35 - 50	51 - 65	over 65	walking leisurely	walking for exercise	running	playing a game/ sport	stationary workout	sitting alone	sitting in group	eating alone	eating in group	sleeping	playing music/ entertainment	picture taking	dog walking	phone	biking	wedding pics	juggling
1		✓			✓					✓																
2		✓								✓																
3		✓			✓					✓												✓				
4		✓								✓												✓				
5		✓								✓																
6		✓			✓					✓												✓				
7		✓			✓					✓												✓				
8		✓								✓																
9		✓								✓												✓				
10		✓			✓					✓																
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12		✓								✓																
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14		✓	✓							✓																
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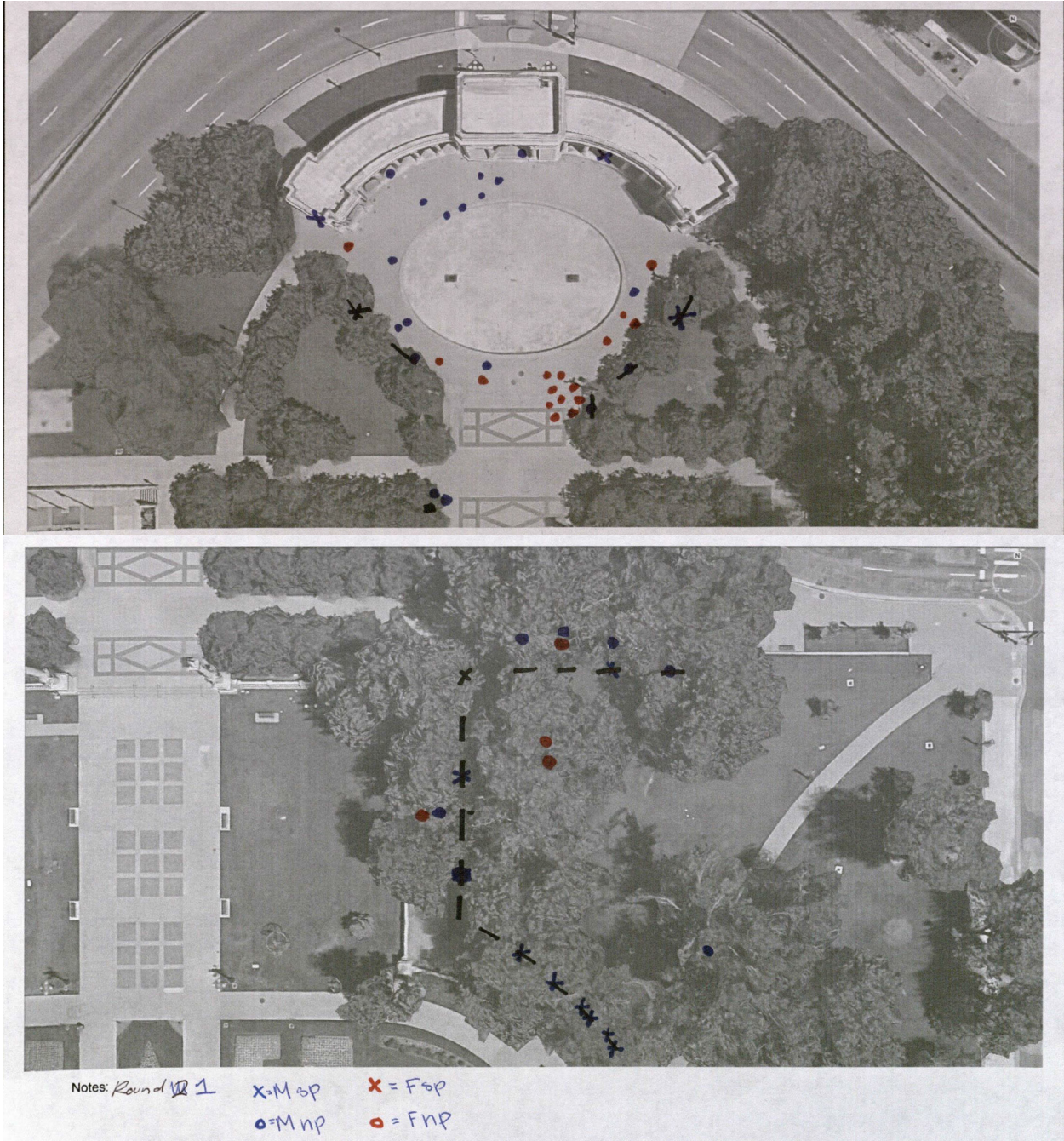
Person #
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Person #	Sex	Age					Activities																		
		Male	Female	0 - 6	7 - 18	18 - 34	35 - 50	51 - 65	over 65	walking leisurely	walking for exercise	running	playing a game/ sport	stationary workout	sitting alone	sitting in group	eating alone	eating in group	sleeping	playing music/ entertainment	paper homework	talking on phone	walking group	smoking	laters
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you running around



## Location Mapping





## Observations

10:50	1 younger male 1 older walking around talking - outside circle
10:52 - 11:06	1 Plaid shirt male - 4 other Males - talking
10:58 - 11:04	Red back bike - orange shirt 1 other interacting
11:06 - 2 leave	3 <sup>SM</sup> still present.
11:15 - 3 SM	- Chatter around. - 1 SM moved away, he had been there since started at 10:30
11:19 4 <sup>th</sup> SM	can back - all chatting 1 SM joining in
3 - males	- handing off by RP - interaction - laughing drop by ground + pickup.
4 asked me to	take picture
1 SM 4 yrs. old.	- wanted to talk to me about helping homeless he was homeless wants to give to other homeless church, metro, pet + cancer, do landscape for free
Didn't view	any conversations betw. S + housed. only - S Male + myself.
majority of S	stay by themselves.
Observed that	this area was used for multiple photo opportunities by schedule photographers as well as passbys taking selfies and photo of friends -
without being	asked Perceived S people would move out of way of photographers.

10:44 - 10:51	sp talking to person on bench looks civil, man gives him money
	start smoking together walk off together
	but continue to talk



*Design with* Compassion